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**‘Social Work as a scarce skill: A study of
retention and turnover in government
subsidized NGO’s with more than five social
workers in the Cape Metropolitan Area’**

By

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**A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the Degree of Masters of Social
Science in Social Policy and Management**

Department of Social Development

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2008

COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole or in part for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in this dissertation, from the work, or works, of other people, has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced

Signature: Signature removed

Date: 2020-07-28

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine turnover and retention of social workers in the non-governmental (NGO) sector of the Cape Metropolitan Area, Western Cape, South Africa. While it appears to be much needed in South Africa, social work is known to be a scarce skill with high levels of organisational turnover. The Department of Social Development issued a Draft Recruitment and Retention Strategy in 2006 to address the problem of scarcity of social workers. The author aimed to establish whether the NGO sector has any similar strategies concerning the scarce skill declaration.

Directors of 12 NGO's took part in interviews that focussed on the scarcity of social workers in South Africa, organisational turnover rates, and strategies that organisations could make use of to retain their social workers. Findings through qualitative data analysis show that NGO directors are aware of the problems related to social work as a scarce skill. Most of the NGO's experience problems in recruiting social workers and have high rates of social worker turnover.

It is evident that very few NGO's have specific policies on social worker retention and that while many NGO's are making use of retention strategies, most are informal and inadequate. Recommendations are made in respect to what NGO's can do to retain their social workers by addressing some of the reasons why social workers are leaving organisations. A major recommendation is greater partnership between government and the NGO Sector.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 serves to introduce the problem to be researched. It outlines the rationale for the research endeavour while setting out the research aim, research questions and research objectives. It includes clarification of concepts, researcher reflexivity and the ethical considerations of the study.

1.1 Introduction to problem to be researched

Addressing delegates in 2006, Social Development Deputy Minister Jean Benjamin stated that social workers are a key strategic resource in addressing the needs and challenges of society (Dlamini, 2006:1). She added that 'the country is facing critical socio-economic challenges which require a concerted effort and commitment by all to meet basic services and improve livelihoods of the vulnerable, through interventions that have sustainable outcomes'.

Despite being understood to be a 'strategic resource', it is evident that social workers in South Africa and indeed internationally, are in short supply and facing many challenges (Kela, 2006). Thompson, Murphy and Stradling (1994) describe social work as being widely recognized as an occupation strongly associated with pressure and stress. Although results of studies vary, one study based on research assessing 104 jobs by Professor Cary Cooper at the University of Manchester's Institute of Science and Technology, in 1997 found social work to rank third in the list of most stressful jobs (Agnew, 2002). Another study done by researchers at the University of Liverpool, listed social work as being in the top three professions characterised by both poor psychological wellbeing and physical ill health caused by stress (Amble, 2005).

In South Africa, a national newspaper cited that social workers across the country are dealing with 'mounting foster-care cases stemming from an increase in teenage pregnancies, abandoned children and the growing number of AIDS orphans' (Govender, 2007:13). They are also 'increasingly encountering substance abuse and a rise in behavioral problems, including domestic violence, rape and theft'... 'The situation is exacerbated by a lack of basic resources, including vehicles and effective

communication facilities, which is hampering access to the needy in rural areas'... 'There is an acute shortage of children's homes and places of safety; an estimated 60 000 homes are headed by children, on average 14 years old, because of the impact of AIDS'... 'Unable to cope, many have left the profession or are working overseas' (Govender, 2007:13).

In 2003 social work was declared to be a scarce skill by the Minister of Public Service and Administration, Geraldine Fraser-Moliket (Dlamini, 2006). Since then, government institutions have been seen to give the topic of social worker retention due attention. A Draft Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Social Workers was released by the South African government on 31 March 2006 as a response to the problem (Kela, 2006). It would seem however that given the enormity of the problem, this strategy might not be enough. Government's recruitment policy has already been criticized as being confined to the public welfare sector (Lund, 2008). This research aims to look at what else is being done in South Africa, specifically in the Cape Metropolitan area, regarding social worker scarcity and turnover.

1.2 The motivation for this study

This research was prompted by the author's personal experience of what appears to be a complicated problem in South Africa; namely, high turnover in the field of social work. Despite the government's Draft Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Social Workers (Kela, 2006), there is little South African literature available pertaining to solutions for the problem, particularly among the private welfare sector. It is the belief of the author that the harms associated with high social worker turnover, necessitate the need to explain, understand and prevent it.

1.3 Research topic

This research aims to explore the issue of retention and turnover of social workers in government-subsidised, non-governmental organisations in the Cape Metropolitan area that employ five or more social workers.

1.4 Research questions

- What are the perceptions of NGO management regarding social work as a scarce skill?
- What are the perceptions of NGO management concerning turnover of their social workers?
- What strategies are being used by NGO management to retain their social workers?

1.5 Research objectives

- To explore the perceptions of NGO management regarding social work as a scarce skill.
- To ascertain the perceptions of NGO management concerning turnover of their social workers.
- To investigate the strategies NGO's employ in order to retain their social work staff.

1.6 Clarification of concepts

Social Work

'The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilizing theories of human behavior and social systems, social work intervenes at the point where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work' (University of New South Wales, 2008:1).

Employee Turnover

The 'rate at which people enter and leave employment' (Oxford Dictionary for International Business, 1998:917).

Retain

The word retain in the context of employee retention is defined by the Oxford Concise English Dictionary as to 'continue to keep engaged in one's service' (1999:1222).

Scarce skill

‘Occupations in which there is a scarcity of qualified and experienced people, currently or anticipated in the future either (a) because such skilled people are not available or (b) they are available but do not meet the employment criteria (Department of Labour, 2006:1).

1.7 Ethical Considerations

While increasing knowledge is a fundamental principal of social work research, this should never be done at the expense of human beings. De Vos (2002: 64) highlight a number of ethical considerations in any research endeavour and those that seem to pertain to this study are:

Harm to experimental subjects and/or respondents

When a person becomes the subject of a qualitative interview, the information that he/she shares with an interviewer becomes more sensitive than would be the case if it were collected through other methods, such as a questionnaire. Therefore, ‘the increased sensitivity requires a high degree of thought and caution regarding the subject’s informed consent, protection of confidentiality, protection against abusive use of raw or coded data, and protection against abusive application of the results of the study’ (Boyatzis, 1998:61).

The respondents of the study could be harmed emotionally if they experienced discomfort due to the nature of the interview schedule questions or if they came to feel criticised. It would also be problematic if the questions caused them to internalise any negative attributes, such as to become negative in areas that they had not previously thought of. There is also the possibility that they could be left with unresolved feelings evoked by the line of questioning. It was therefore the researcher’s responsibility to make sure that all respondents left the research setting in a positive emotional condition. The researcher felt that the interviews ended on a positive note with respondents realising that there is something to be done about high turnover of social workers.

Informed consent

Informed consent is 'a written agreement to participate given by subjects after they learn something about the research procedure' (Neuman, 2000:96). Informed consent can be viewed as a contractual agreement between the respondents and the researcher. The researcher ensured that she provided adequate information about the goals of the investigation and what it would entail through a comprehensive introductory letter, (See Appendix C), outlining the research. This was given to the respondents to read at the beginning of each interview. All respondents participated voluntarily and were free to say 'no' to participation, as did one of the organisations in the sample.

Violation of privacy, anonymity or confidentiality

The researcher needed to ensure that all of the respondents were aware they were guaranteed anonymity and that answers could not be traced back to specific individuals. She also needed to prevent the possibility of open-ended answers leading back to particular individuals and to ensure that findings were vague enough not to be traced back to any one individual. It is hoped that the provision of anonymity and confidentiality improved the research by helping the respondents feel comfortable to express their true feelings.

Actions and competence of researchers

The researcher's previous experience in conducting research and other interviews reduced the risk of unprofessional behaviour. Despite this, she still had to take extra care to attempt faultless actions and competence such as in processing of data and using specific and relevant skills throughout.

Release or publication of the findings

The researcher understood that the information found in this study needed to be formulated and conveyed clearly and unambiguously and not manipulated to support the assumptions of the researcher. The participants were told that they would have access to the findings of the study to ensure this.

1.8 Reflexivity

This research process has been an enriching, eye opening and challenging experience. I was particularly interested in the research taking place due to personal experiences of working as a social worker in both the NGO and government sectors. It has saddened me over time to see colleagues, once enthusiastic and excited about their work, leave organisations depressed and disillusioned with life and with social work in general. As a result, much of this research process has affected me on a personal level and many feelings have been evoked.

As the researcher, I had to contain my own emotions and work to remain objective. I had to be aware of the perceptions and assumptions I had coming into the research, and make sure I did not set out merely to prove my own theories and aid my own interests. Being a social worker meant that I was already aware of many of the problems within the sampled organisations. I thus already had an idea of the areas of weakness before I entered the research and could probe the directors more directly with my questions. At times, it was difficult to be a relatively young and new social worker interviewing others in senior positions in the profession. I believe however that I succeeded in identifying with the respondents while separating myself in my role as researcher.

1.9 Conclusion

This introductory chapter served to outline the rationale for this research endeavour and clarify the research topic and the concepts it entails. While doing this, it also set out the research questions and objectives and discussed how this research affected the researcher as an individual. The following chapter contains a review of the literature that influenced this research. An outline is given of the structure of the rest of the report as follows:

- Chapter 2: Literature Review
- Chapter 3: Methodology
- Chapter 4: Data Presentation and Discussion
- Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations
- References
- Appendices

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2 will look at relevant literature surrounding the issue of social work as a scarce skill in South Africa. It will also report on relevant studies, articles and theories surrounding the fields of retention and turnover. While focussing on the profession of social work in South Africa's NGO's, mention will also be made about international social work trends and insights drawn from the business sector on these topics.

2.1 Introduction: Social development faces vast challenges, implementation gaps and lack of capacity

It is of concern to those in the field that the Social Development sector in South Africa is facing vast social challenges (Dlamini, 2006). These challenges arise from 'systemic poverty, unemployment, inequality and other associated ills' (Skweyiya, 2007:1). In his inauguration speech on the 27th of March 2004, President Thabo Mbeki referred to the fact that poverty continues to be endemic and widespread in South Africa and disfigures the face of it (Department of Social Development, 2007). He suggested that it is impossible for the dignity of the people of South Africa to be fully restored until this situation is addressed, and promised that the struggle to eradicate poverty would continue to be a central part of the government's national efforts to build a 'new' South Africa (Department of Social Development, 2007).

Despite this and other very public declarations of intent, individuals working in the field of social development have often noted a gap between what is set out to be addressed by government and what is actually implemented in South Africa (Brynard, 2007). Lombard (2006) gives an example of this as being the criticism levelled at government when it introduced the neo-liberalist capitalist macro-economic policy of GEAR (the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Policy). At this time, individuals and organizations began to doubt, not government's commitment but its ability to implement policy and social development intervention at a grassroots level. Brynard (2007:358) mentions that this is what is known as a 'policy gap', defined as 'what transpires in the implementation process between policy expectations and perceived policy results'.

While social development policies generally appear to be constructive in writing, one way in which these are currently falling short is that staff are not always available to implement them successfully (Kela, 2006). In his 2005 State of the Nation Address, even President Mbeki expressed his concern over the 'lack of all round capacity' and 'weakness' in the implementation of certain national programmes and whether South Africa had the capacity to implement its development programmes (Mbeki, 2005). Development is just one area where social workers are trained and able to deliver effective services given the time and resources (Lombard, 2006). However, they are not always granted this luxury due to South Africa facing significant shortages in the supply of social service professionals required to deliver these services (Skweyiya, 2007).

The National Minister for Public Service and Administration is said to have recognized the scarcity of social workers in 2003 (Kela, 2006). It was at this time that government developed strategy to improve the supply of high quality skills in areas that would be responsive to the socio-economic needs of the South African society (Draft Recruitment and Retention Strategy, 2006). Social worker skills were some skills that were identified, and a national instruction was given for the development of a policy addressing the issue. This was one of the first attempts on the part of government to rectify the problem and to identify that social work was in need of such a policy.

The problem of social worker scarcity has not improved since the release of this strategy however. Skweyiya (2007) recently cited the problem of overburdened social workers carrying huge caseloads, high workloads and working in inadequate working conditions. He stated that this leads to burnout, poor quality of services and a limitation on ability to meet service delivery demands. Govender, (2007:13) reported a social worker as saying that she had a case load of 300. This meant that that she could spend little more than '5 minutes per client' during her 40 hour work week. The social worker being interviewed mentioned that in her experience social workers were stressed and often took sick leave. She added 'It was like we were putting on band-aids'... 'we're not giving communities quality service'.

Lombard (2006) notes the impact that the shortage of social workers will have on society. She believes that it will, and already does, seriously undermine social work's ability to respond to its social change and development functions. When looking at the issue of scarcity of social workers, Professor Sulina Green of the University of Stellenbosch and Vice-President of Child Welfare South Africa was recently cited as stating that 'there is a crisis in our country' (Govender, 2007: 13).

2.2 Social work as a profession

Definitions of social work change over time, but in July 2001, social practitioners and educators from across the world met at an international conference to work out a definition that could be applied worldwide. It was agreed that 'the social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work' (University of New South Wales, 2008:1).

According to the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) mentioned in Hepworth, Rooney and Larsen (2002:5), '...the primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet basic human needs, with particular attention to the needs of vulnerable, oppressed, and poor people'. Social work should focus on improving people's social functioning in relation to their surroundings and it should try to strengthen their potential and capacity (Potgieter, 1998). Social work in South Africa requires a four-year University degree (University of Cape Town, 2008) and practising social workers are expected to register with a professional council and be subject to its requirements (South African Council for Social Service Professions, 2008).

When looking at the value individuals place on social work, it is evident that it has been undervalued for many years. This can be seen in the ongoing debate as to whether it should be defined as an occupation or a profession. Gray and Mazibuko (2002: 192) state that social work is in an uncertain and precarious position, with a relatively low status in society, '...under threat of losing the little professional power

it has achieved'. Many authors have felt the need to argue that social work is a profession and that it should be respected as such. Skidmore and Thackeray (1964) commented more than 20 years ago that although social work was once comprised of lay people providing services to the poor, it is a discipline, with scientific methods, artfully taking remedial action on problems in several areas of society.

Other than being undervalued, social work as a profession faces other concerns. Thompson et al (1994) list some of the pressures associated with social work and these include resource constraints, frequent and rapid change, unhelpful management practices and a disregard for the importance of supporting staff through the sometimes-immense demands and complexities of their work. Thompson et al (1994) add that dealing with pain, distress and suffering brought about by crisis, loss, abuse, poverty, social problems and oppression is bound to leave its mark on the worker involved.

Perhaps one of the largest problems with social work though, is that in addition to the above-mentioned difficulties and challenges, there come a range of other pressures that can be seen as preventable. Davies (1998:9) describes modern social work as being in a state of crisis where the profession attempts to function in an environment of '...obstructive administrative systems'. He adds that there are problems due to severe financial restrictions and conflicting demands emanating from 'confused legislation' and 'a concomitant plethora of guidelines, standards and procedures'. Davies (1998) believes that while society has always displayed ambivalence toward social work, the profession is now also hugely under-funded and understaffed.

2.3 Social Work in South Africa

Social workers are crucial role players in post-apartheid South Africa, where the divide between rich and poor keeps growing (Lombard, 2006). It is evident however, that social work services have also undergone much change post 1994 with South Africa's acceptance back into the international 'arena'. The Draft Recruitment and Retention Strategy (2006:5) explains some of the effects of globalization processes on social work and one aspect mentioned is that of international organizations recruiting South African workers. The Draft Recruitment and Retention Strategy

(2006:5) makes mention of the fact that there has been a rapid increase in the number of social workers leaving South Africa to work in other countries, so much so that a 'Commonwealth Code of Practice for International Recruitment of Health Workers' was developed.

It is evident that various role players are raising concerns about the capacity for social workers to fulfill their crucial role in South Africa (Lombard, 2006). An example of this problem is illustrated in the Children's Bill (Bill 70D of 2003) that has recently been introduced. In it, government has admitted that in order for the Bill to be successfully implemented, 16 000 new social workers are needed over the next three years (Lombard, 2006). This is problematic as by 2007 there were only 11 432 social workers registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions (Kela, 2006) and universities only provide approximately 500 students per annum (Du Toit, 2006:12 as cited by Lombard, 2006). It does not seem that anyone knows where these social workers will be found or what will happen to the new legislation and more importantly, to children in South Africa if there is not a marked increase in South Africa's social worker numbers. Speaking specifically about social work with children affected by HIV/AIDS, Lombard (2006: 17) states 'if South Africa fails to reach these children, we will witness another generation of unskilled and uneducated youth and adults'.

Lombard (2006:7) refers to the fact that already in 1996, when government introduced their new macro economic policy, GEAR, standing for 'growth, employment and redistribution', government was accused of a 'glaring neglect' of social welfare services', particularly in the non-governmental sector. Lombard (2006) goes on to explain how media gave this neglect attention, and government, consequently, added funds to expand social welfare service delivery in the NGO sector. It is apparent however that these allocations have not been sufficient to remove the backlog caused by the neglect, or to repair the damage. One direct result has been the NGO sector experiencing an even worse human resource capacity problem to that of government.

Currently social worker conditions have been seen as a 'hot' topic even in the media. On 28 October 2007, a Sunday Times headline (Govender, 2007:13) stated 'Social Workers face growing national crisis: shortage of staff and appalling salaries at heart

of the problem says Public Services Association'. The article describes how the national Public Servants Association, which represents government social workers, believed that 'South Africa needs another 50 000 social workers to address the growing domestic problems in the country' (Govender, 2007: 13). In line with this shortage, a recent study conducted by the Unit of Social Research of the Department of Social Development found that organizations experience challenges such as poor responses to recruitment efforts, posts being vacant for lengthy periods, a lack of suitably qualified social work candidates, high caseloads and lack of interest in working for NGO's (Brink, 2007). Seventy two percent of the organizations surveyed in this study indicated that their level of staff turnover had increased; 60% responded that they were unable to recruit and retain staff and 60% reported having vacancies at the time of the research (Brink, 2007).

In her speech to delegates in 2006, Dr. Benjamin attributed the main problem with recruiting and retaining social workers to the availability of more enticing offers in other sectors within the country as well as internationally (Dlamini, 2006:1). She added that '...one of the inabilities to retain social workers is further exacerbated by poor working conditions and the fact that social workers are multi-skilled and therefore easily absorbed into other fields'. Nelson (2000: 450) discusses the varied situations that social workers can work in, listing hospitals, psychiatric clinics, child and family welfare agencies, residential institutions, prisons, agencies for the differently-abled, special schools, associations helping prisoners and their families, and government departments. He goes on to add that certain areas such as commerce provide higher salaries and a less severe and less stressful experience than social work.

Govender (2007: 13) agrees with this idea but it would seem that the poor working conditions for social workers in South Africa are actually pushing social workers away more than the lucrative offers are luring them. She cites that '...frustrated social workers in the public and private sector say their 'paltry' salaries are not commensurate with the rising number of cases they have to deal with'. 'South African social workers have to cope with case loads ranging from 600 to 3000 in extreme cases compared to 13 to 20 per social worker in Britain'.

Interestingly enough, the Draft Recruitment and Retention Strategy (Department of Social Development, 2006:5) mentions a World Health Organisation study in 1970 finding that no matter how strong recipient countries pull factors are, migration only seems to happen if the donor country also has strong push factors. This appears relevant to the state of social work in South Africa. Lombard (2006) agrees that salaries are 'paltry' but adds that although social workers earn meagre salaries to begin with, social workers in the NGO sector earn salaries that are significantly lower than those of government social workers.

One solution has been to employ social auxiliary workers which Nelson (2000: 451) defines as 'rendering a supporting service to social workers. They assist or support the social workers in a team context by working with individuals, groups and communities to improve their social functioning and promoting healthy relationships'. He states that the demand for social auxiliary workers is increasing particularly because of the spread of the Children's Act and that the Department of Social Development indicated that for 2007, 3000 social auxiliary workers needed to be trained.

In the meantime, areas such as child welfare, poverty and crime appear to worsen and those most equipped to make a difference are losing heart and becoming disillusioned. According to the Public Servants Association (PSA) as cited by Govender (2007:13), 'The morale of social workers is at an all time low. Those in the public sector are leaving in droves to associated professions in the private sector, or for lucrative positions overseas'.

2.4 Turnover in Social Work

As previously stated, high turnover of social workers is a huge problem in South Africa, where social work is already a scarce skill. Brink (2007) presents recent research in the Western Cape where social worker turnover was as high as 50% in certain organizations. Findings show one organization as having to appoint 10 social workers in one post over four years in a particular area. Another organization experienced a complete turnover of social workers in an 18-month period.

Briede and Loffell (2007) show that in 2002, one large Child Welfare Society lost 43% of its social workers. These included supervisors and about 44% of those lost went to work for government departments. Lombard (2006:20) makes mention of the migration of social workers from NGOs to government due to better salaries and better working conditions in government. She adds that this is a key area of tension between the two sectors and states that '...it is in no-one's interest, not least the poor, if communication and trust were to break down completely between the government and NGOs'.

Literature on social work provides examples of other reasons why people leave the social work profession and factors such as remuneration and high workload are just some of them. Brink's (2007) study found that the main reasons why social workers were leaving were low salaries, high caseloads, stress and burnout, lack of career advancement, poor working conditions, location, crime and insecurity.

It would seem that turnover in the field of social work is an international problem. Westbrook, Ellis and Ellet (2006:38) show that even in the USA, agencies struggle to attract and retain qualified, competent staff. The reasons that they give for high turnover are similar to those cited in South African literature and these include: 'challenging working conditions', 'inadequate compensation', 'large case loads', 'long hours and on-call responsibilities', 'voluminous paperwork', 'frequent policy changes coupled with stringent state and federal policy requirements', 'issues of personal safety', 'inadequate training and supervision', 'involuntary clients facing complex problems', 'lack of adequate resources to serve clients', 'lack of promotional opportunities', 'media sensationalization of cases involving child deaths' and 'negative public opinion'. They have found that high rates of turnover make it even more difficult for the workers that remain at the organization (Westbrook et al, 2006).

This difficulty for other workers is just one of the costs associated with high turnover rates. Ahlrichs (2000) explains that turnover can also result in missed deadlines, low morale and difficulties in recruiting top-quality new hires. Some of the financial and time costs mentioned are in accrued vacations, advertising and recruiting fees, interview expenses (first, second and third interviews, résumé screening), printing,

assessments, criminal/credit/reference checks, temporary or contract employees, orientation materials, formal training, and exit interviews (Ahlrichs, 2000:16).

Kaye and Jordan-Evans (1999) mention that multiple research studies suggest that the cost of replacing key people runs between 70 and 200 percent of the person's annual salary. They cite a study that found that losing an employee costs between six and 18 months pay, hi-tech workers, professionals and managers cost twice as much as other employees to replace and that many hidden costs are incurred. Ahlrichs (2000:16) lists examples of hidden costs to turnover as including low morale, loss of organizational knowledge, loss of client relationships, disrupted departments, missed deadlines, chain reaction turnover, notice period, knowledge transfer and distracted peers and subordinates dealing with feelings of loss.

Westbrook et al (2006:39) cite some of the direct and indirect costs associated with high rates of employee turnover in human service professions and how the agencies involved cannot afford these costs. Indirect costs include that workers left behind have to assume responsibility for uncovered case loads even though they are already over-burdened. They also cite APHSA, (2005); Powell & York, (1992) and Balfour & Neff, (1993) who show that when clients have to move from worker to worker, 'understanding of clients' unique situations, rapport and trust deteriorate, and important case decisions may be delayed as new workers attempt to sift the details of complex cases'.

An example of this is mentioned by the Jordan Institute for Families (1999) who mention that when agencies do not have enough staff, stress levels and caseloads of other workers increase and miscommunication and mistakes can occur. They add that when cases are handed over to new workers the quality of services can be lowered. One problem that they cite in particular is delays in finding permanent placements for children. Westbrook et al (2006:38) cite the Child Welfare League of America (2004), which states that, 'no issue has a greater effect on the capacity of the child welfare system to effectively serve vulnerable children and families than the shortage of a competent and stable workforce'.

2.5 Retention in social work: Theory on strategies that can be employed by organizations to reduce turnover

Despite the challenges associated with social work, it is evident that people still choose to become social workers. In his book on theories of career development, Osipow (1983) describes how our civilization has evolved to a point where in Western society at least, individuals are able to choose the type of work that they do and the potential of choice is highly valued. It would also appear that considerable psychological gratification can be derived from social work despite the often-chronic complaints of social workers. Evidence of this can be seen in a study of Canadian child welfare workers where it was found that even participants that scored high on a measure of emotional exhaustion or burnout could have high levels of job satisfaction (Stalker, Mandell, Frensch, Harvey & Wright, 2007).

Kaye and Jordan-Evans (1999) believe that managers and supervisors have the most critical role to play in winning the 'race for talent' and many are abdicating this role because they feel that key retention strategies are out of their hands. They think it is all about money, rewards and benefits, which are areas they do not have control over, yet there are other areas to consider. Kaye and Jordan-Evans (1999) state that often the reasons why employees are leaving could have been dealt with and that employers should ask employees what keeps them and what would lure them away so that they do not have to guess.

Ahlich (2000) highlights the importance of interviewing people when they leave an organisation to establish the reasons why they are leaving and whether there is anything that can be done to convince them to stay. This author does emphasize the importance of exit interviews being confidential however, as there could be repercussions for an employee who is still seeking a good reference or working relationship from the organisation they are leaving. HR Focus (2008) suggests that employees can be given an advance copy of the reference that will be provided to potential employers along with a promise to honour that reference to minimise the employee's insecurity. They also believe that success in getting full and honest feedback during an exit interview is dependant on communication before the employee resigned. If a change is made at an organisation because of an exit

interview, it is preferable that the change be reported to employees so that they know exit interviews are taken seriously (HR Focus, 2008).

It appears that studies of job turnover and retention have generally produced contradictory findings. Smith (2005) cites several studies to prove this point. These studies include: Ellis & Ellet (2003 as cited by Smith, 2005) who concluded that higher salaries lead to job retention; Jayaratne & Chess, (1984 as cited by Smith, 2005), who found that salary level is not an important predictor of retention; the U.S. General Accounting Office (2003 as cited by Smith, 2005) who found that lower case load levels and Dickinson & Perry, (2002 as cited by Smith, 2005) who found that higher case load levels have been associated with the intent to stay in a job. Smith's (2005) list includes studies that have found that job satisfaction predicts job retention (MorBarak, Nissly, & Levin, 2001 as cited by Smith, 2005), and studies where it does not (Fryer et al, 1989 as cited by Smith, 2005).

Kaye and Jordan-Evans (1999:6) list the most common reasons why employees stay in jobs and they include: career growth, learning and development, exciting work and challenge, meaningful work, making a difference and a contribution, great people, being part of a team, having a good boss, recognition for work well done, fun on the job, autonomy, sense of control over work, flexibility evident in work hours and dress code, fair pay and benefits, inspiring leadership, pride in the organization, its mission and quality of product, a great work environment, location, job security, the work place being family-friendly, and cutting edge technology. Freund (2005) defines satisfied employees as those individuals who feel that their personal and organizational goals fit together, and employees who feel that there is sufficient opportunity for professional development, proper guidance, and a proper reward system.

It is important that employers also be aware of theory on generational aspects (Codrington, 1998). The Cape Argus (2007:14) refers to the fact that new generations of employees have very different views of the world and do things very differently resulting in a reshaping of the work environment. Armour (2005:1) cites that '... new job entrants are changing careers faster than college students change their majors, creating frustration for employers struggling to retain and recruit talented high-

performers'... 'Unlike the generations that have gone before them, Gen Y has been pampered, nurtured and programmed with a slew of activities since they were toddlers, meaning they are both high-performance and high-maintenance'... 'They believe in their own self worth and value enough that they're not shy about trying to change the companies they work for'.

Codrington (2008:5) shows that the new generation of young people tends to see friendship and family as more important than work. He believes that 'they work so that they can enjoy a life outside of work. This is in marked contrast to many of the older generations whose life is their work'. This generation is also believed to embrace change and enjoy it: 'they look for something different each day, and get bored very quickly (Codrington, 1998:5). Many sources urge all organizations to consider how they need to change in order to attract and retain the age group of employees known as generation Y. An example of this is the company 'Deloitte', which has put an entertaining video on a website popular among young people called 'YouTube', broadcasting, that 'Deloitte is the best place to work' (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PgybNb3fME&feature=related>).

It is evident that many of the reasons listed for employees staying at organisations can be used by organizations as strategies to retain their staff. If management works to have these aspects present in their organisations, they are in fact employing retention strategies, regardless of whether or not they have a specific policy regarding retention of employees. Some of these 'retention strategies' are discussed in the final paragraphs of this chapter.

2.5.1 Increasing commitment

Freund (2005) explains that research shows that high levels of organizational commitment generally mean that a social worker's intentions to leave an organisation are lower and that they are prepared to invest more personal energy and resources into the organization, leading to more efficient and professional performance. Rycroft (1994, as cited by Smith, 2005) discusses how several exploratory studies have identified similar concepts when looking at reasons why child welfare staff remained in their jobs. One survey of child welfare staff concluded that 'professional

commitment' to the work of child welfare was the strongest predictor of job retention (Ellis et al, 2003 as cited by Smith), while another stated that respondents reported a sense of mission about their work, and a sense of investment both personally and professionally (Rycroft, 1994 as cited by Smith, 2005).

Freund (2005:1) cites Dunham, Grube & Castenada, (1994) who define organizational commitment as '...a meaningful psychological state, since a worker in a state of high organizational commitment invests personal resources to promote the organization and its goals'. Freund (2005) explains that research has shown that workers who no longer believe in an organization and its goals are more likely to want to leave. He goes on to add that organizations should work to create a sense of commitment among their workers to the organization and its goals, before they even begin to think of leaving as an option.

Latting, Beck, Slack, Tetrick, Jones, Etchetegary & Da Silva (2004:32) show that increased commitment could manifest in the form of employees acting more reliably, dependably, and consistently. Freund (2005) noted in his research that it has been seen in community service organizations that motivated employees are good for both the organization and the client. The reason for this is that devotion to the value of the activity, regardless of location and circumstances, ensures better service for the client. It is thus possible to assume that increasing commitment of social workers is a strategy that can be used to retain them.

2.5.2 Increasing Job Satisfaction

Reasons for turnover, reasons for staying at organisations and reasons for being committed are all interlinked with a certain amount of job satisfaction. Dawis and Lofquist (1984: 21) define job satisfaction as '...the result of the worker's appraisal of the extent to which the work environment fulfils the individuals needs' as well as 'a pleasurable affective condition resulting from one's appraisal of the way in which the experienced job situation meets one's needs, values and expectations'. Freund (2005) discusses how in welfare services, a worker with a sense of satisfaction tends to act more professionally towards their job. He goes on to add that these employees contribute in a meaningful manner to both their organization and their associates.

Kaye et al (1999) believe that valuable employees are often likely to suffer from job discontent due to the fact that they are self-propelled and energetic. These authors found that employees like this need stimulating work, opportunities for personal challenge and growth and to be reminded of how important they are to the organization (Kaye et al, 1999). Weir (1976) cites Vroom (1961) as finding that a satisfying work role tended to be one with 'high pay, substantial promotional opportunities, considerate and participative supervision, an opportunity to interact with ones' colleagues, varied duties and a high degree of control over work methods and work pace' (Weir, 1976:9).

Studies linking job satisfaction to high pay and substantial promotional opportunities would seem to contradict any arguments that one could be satisfied as a social worker. This does not seem to be the case however. It can be seen that there are other areas of satisfaction that can be derived from social work. One of these is the ideal of self-efficacy. Cherniss (1995) explains how many entering the helping profession turn their backs on more lucrative occupations to enter a field like nursing or teaching because they want to help others and feel that meaning is as important as money. He adds that this is how it should be, as without idealism, helping professionals become less caring and compassionate; factors necessary to those occupations.

Nelson (2000) states that social workers have a relatively high level of job satisfaction due to the independence and autonomy that they enjoy, as well as the variety of work environments and roles, which are open to them. This is important to note, as it would seem that unless social workers are happy in their jobs, they will probably not remain in their current job or perhaps even in the profession. This is evident in research such as that done by Freund (2005) whose study showed that both career commitment and job satisfaction had a significant influence on people's withdrawal intentions and on their thinking of quitting an organization.

Other studies also show how the link between job satisfaction and retention can be inconclusive. Westbrook et al (2006) cite Landsman (2001) who found that organizational commitment and job satisfaction directly influenced workers' intentions to remain employed in child welfare. They also cite Fryer, Miyoshi, & Thomas (1989) however, who conducted a study and found that there were many

dissatisfied child welfare workers who remained in their jobs and that job dissatisfaction did not necessarily lead to employee attrition. Smith (2005) found in his study that there were similar levels of job satisfaction among staff who left and staff who stayed at organisations, raising the question of whether dissatisfied workers were remaining in child welfare jobs.

Despite the contradictory findings of studies, it is possible to see that that increasing levels of job satisfaction should result in staff retention or in the very least, result in staff members being more committed to their careers and being more effective in their jobs.

2.5.3 Leadership, motivation and rewards

When looking for a definition of leadership, Kort (2008) states the following ‘there is wide disagreement about what leadership is, given that there are so many definitions available, the differences between them are only apparent. They are actually saying the same thing about what leadership is and even what its characteristic features are. Leadership is about one person (the leader) getting other people (the followers) to do something. The definitions differ only in the particulars about the roles of leaders in practical settings.

Michaels, Handfield-Jones & Axelrod (2001: xii) state that leaders need to realise that talent management is a crucial and huge part of their jobs and that they set the tone for the organisation. These authors believe that talent management cannot be delegated and should take much of their time, passion, courage and determination. Smit (1990) adds to this that leadership involves influencing and motivating in a non-coercive manner. Given that leadership is about influence and motivation, it is important for a leader/manager to understand motivation and influence so that they can act to elicit it.

Hellriegel and Slocum (1992:429) define motivation as ‘any influence that elicits, channels, or sustains people’s behaviour’. Gibson (1980) emphasises the importance of a leader understanding the meaning of motivation, its practical uses, factors that motivate people, and what a leader can do to increase the motivation of subordinates. He goes on to say that managers need to know the objects, things, or feelings, which people value as rewards for their work effort, and what they strive for in their work.

Armstrong (2002: 3) defines employee reward as being ‘...about how people are rewarded in accordance with their value to an organisation. It is concerned with both financial and non-financial rewards’.

Gibson (1980) explains that there are three primary sets of assumptions about what rewards will motivate individuals and cites these as material rewards (unless the rewards of pay are offered people will not work), social rewards (people are essentially social animals and as such are motivated by their need for human relationships) and finally intrinsic rewards, where the basic assumption is that the most important motivating force in an individual is their need to achieve feelings of mastery in activities and the full realisation of their potential. It is important to note that people differ in what they value and what they value may change over time.

Increasing the motivation of staff is highly important and this is evident from studies that have found that when staff are committed to an organisation and motivated, they tend to engage in actions, which lead to an increase in the organisations’ overall efficiency. Latting et al (2004:31) based the main hypothesis of their study on the concept of ‘Social Exchange Theory’, which looks at the alternate ways in which people may respond to the way they are treated.

2.5.3.1 Material rewards

Armstrong (2002:4) explains that a reward system consists of financial rewards (fixed and variable pay) and employee benefits, which together comprise total remuneration. He states that ‘...a reward system expresses what an organisation values and is prepared to pay for’. The basic philosophy is that people should be rewarded for the value they create. The overall aim of these systems is ‘...to support the attainment of the organisations strategic and shorter term objectives by helping to ensure that it has the skilled, competent, committed and well-motivated work-force it needs’ (Armstrong 2002:13). The aspect of material rewards will be further discussed under the heading of remuneration.

2.5.3.2 Social rewards

Armstrong (2002:4) explains that a positive organisational culture can work to improve employee performance and organisational effectiveness. He defines

organisational culture as ‘the pattern of shared beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, norms and values in an organisation: they may not have been articulated but in the absence of direct instructions, they influence the way people act and the way things get done’. It is apparent that the culture of an organisation is generally imparted by that specific organisations’ leadership (Brymen, 1999).

Latting et al (2004:32) differentiate between the terms ‘transformational leadership’ and ‘transactional leadership’ and explain that if employees are led transactionally; they tend to focus on their own immediate interests, but if they are led transformationally, they tend to move away from immediate self-interest to the interest of others, including the organisation in which they work. It is thus evident that if top management leads transformationally, such as by supporting working conditions that ultimately lead to employees having increased responsibility, this could serve as a form of positive reinforcement and the employees could reciprocate by showing increased commitment to the organisations’ interests outside of their own interests.

2.5.3.3 Intrinsic rewards

Armstrong (2002:4) explains that a reward system also incorporates non-financial rewards, including recognition, praise, achievement, responsibility and personal growth. Several studies have found that child welfare staff remain in their jobs due to intrinsic rewards such as appreciation for the value of their work (Freund, 2005). Michaels et al (2001) researched 27 of the known ‘top’ companies in the USA and found that reward and recognition for high individual performance was rated by people as more important, than the overall amount of cash that they earned.

Smith (2005: 154) cites one study where respondents reported a sense of ‘mission’ about their work, and a sense of personal and professional ‘investment’. Another that she discusses is a study where participants reported that they appreciated opportunities to make ‘quiet’ contributions and that they found meaning and a sense of personal accomplishment in their work. Westbrook et al, (2006) list some of the labels used when looking at intrinsic motivators and they include psychological reward, altruism, mission, obligation to help, human caring and service orientation.

Freund (2005:1) cites various studies that name the intrinsic motivators of psychological gratification, commitment and motivation.

Looking at psychological aspects, Slate, Wells & Johnson (2003:537) found that when employees felt that they had some input into work-place decision making, they were more likely to express higher opinions of their jobs and less likely to report physical symptoms of stress, which can be translated into greater productivity and morale, with less absenteeism, health care costs and employee turnover.

2.5.4 Decreasing stress and burnout issues

Another aspect that has been seen to affect retention in organisations is the high levels of stress and burnout experienced by human service workers (Siefert, Jayaratne & Chess, 1991 and Smit, 1990). It has been found by numerous authors conducting numerous studies, that human service professions tend to be particularly stressful and difficult and that this can lead to what was previously defined as 'burnout'. Weiton (2001:544) discusses how burnout is generally brought on gradually by heavy, chronic work-related stress and that it is not only a mental and emotional form of exhaustion, but also a physical exhaustion characterised by chronic fatigue, low energy and weakness.

There have also been many studies that have documented the effects of stress and it has been found to lead to a large number of health problems in individuals, both physically and psychologically (Slate et al 2003). On an organisational level, stress has a direct effect on productivity, employee turnover, health costs, disability payment, workers compensation awards and sick leave, which leads to huge financial costs (Slate et al, 2003: 520).

One such study was done by Matrunola (1996) who found that nurses (also human service workers) who were satisfied with their jobs were seldom absent from work, and at a lesser risk of burnout than nurses who were dissatisfied with their jobs. Barak, Nissly & Livin (2001:655) show in their study that ways to decrease stress and burnout include stress management training, providing additional instrumental and social support, reducing case load sizes, increasing workforce size and providing peer support groups. It is thus possible to see that there is a link between retention and

stress and burnout levels in organisations and that ways should be found to reduce these.

2.5.5 Adaptation of work content

As already mentioned, due to the high levels of stress and burnout evident in social work, a key retention strategy for social workers can be to adapt their work content and work load (Barak et al, 2001). Another strategy suggested by Weir (1976) is that of developing methods of fitting the worker to the job in terms of selecting the people whose skills, abilities and personality makes them suited to a particular job. He believes that people adjust their expectations according to their jobs and may not use their full potential. Weir (1976) also shows that workers can see their job descriptions as inflexible and that employers should work to adjust work content to suit the workers' needs and abilities.

2.5.6 Adaptation of working conditions and resources

Kaye and Jordan Evans (1999) discuss how it is a key retention strategy for an organisation to have a great working environment, as this improves employee satisfaction and motivation. Moos (1994) developed a popular psychometric test called the Work Environment Scale, which evaluates the work environments of organisations. In his research, he has shown that there are three underlying sets of dimensions that influence the social climate of organisations, for better or worse. The first is the relationship dimension, which covers three subscales; employee involvement in the job; co-worker cohesion and supervisor support. The second dimension is that of personal growth which includes the subscales of employee autonomy, task orientation and work pressure. The third and last dimension is that of system maintenance and change and this includes the subscales of clarity, managerial control, innovation and physical comfort. It is evident that Moos (1994) believes that each of these factors is important for keeping employees happy in their jobs.

2.5.7 Increasing levels of security

Security is known to be an important aspect in retention theory. This includes the aspects of personal security, job security and legal security (Michaels et al, 2001). Kaye et al, (1999) list one of the most common reasons for employees staying in jobs

as being them having job security, while Smith (2005) shows that several studies have found that the intrinsic rewards available to social workers can be reduced by aspects such as legal problems, influencing social work staff to leave.

Lack of any of these three of these types of security can be evident in social work. A recent incident in this regard was reported by the Cape Times, speaking of a social worker at the SA National Council for Alcoholism and Drug Dependency being held hostage by a client for 4 hours (Dolley, 2008:1). The front page of this local paper cited that 'Police negotiators rushed to the scene as anxious Sanca employees huddled outside the building, while the 36-year old man held their colleague at knifepoint inside'.

Ahlich (2000) explains that according to Max Neef's (1987) theory, people have a taxonomy of human needs and that before looking at issues such as providing workers with a sense of belonging, self esteem or opportunities for growth and development, employees must feel that their physiological and security needs are met, namely survival and safety. These are basic and fundamental human needs. The Jordan Institute for Families (2000) discuss a study done in 1999 that lists social workers having liability concerns as one of the chief reasons why they leave organisations. This shows that legal concerns are also fundamental to social workers feeling safe.

2.5.8 Fair remuneration and employee benefits

Fair pay and benefits are some of the reasons cited by Kaye et al (1999) when looking at common reasons why employees stay at organisations. Westbrook et al, (2006) show that inadequate salaries have been linked to child welfare employee turnover. The salary and remuneration that people earn seems to indicate their perceived value to an organisation (Armstrong, 2002: 3). It is apparent that remuneration within the field of social work is a cause of disagreement for many (Kela, 2006), and that it is affecting employee retention in the field of social work.

A speech made by a representative of the Department of Social Development five years ago discussed the fact that the South African Council for Social Service Professions lobbied for better salaries and service conditions for social service professionals (Department of Social Development, 2003:1). It stated that 'the huge

imbalance, inequity and discrepancy in the remuneration of the professionals in the social service sector are of great concern', that these impact negatively on them and that they are losing valuable practitioners, because the low salaries are not compatible and market related.

Armstrong (2002:43) explains how most organisations understand pay levels for jobs. He shows that there are essentially three factors that affect the level of pay of individual employees: '...the value of the job to the organisation, the value of the person to the organisation and the value of the job/person in the market place'. Factors that affect the level of pay for employees in general are affordability, the policy of the organisation on whether it is a high, medium or low payer and conditions, in both the external and internal labour markets. These can include: 1. Supply and demand (if labour is scarce, pay is likely to go up and vice versa) 2. Efficiency wage theory (paying more raises performance) and 3. Human Capital Theory where investing in people to develop their skill or competence is necessary and this should influence individual pay.

2.5.9 Ensuring staff development and training

Kaye et al (1999) explain that organisations can gain a competitive edge in employee retention by keeping employees on a continual path of growth and development. This needs to be done despite findings that more developed workers are more likely to leave organizations and seek job alternatives outside the organisation (Freund, 2006). One reason for this is that many employees leave organisations if they are not challenged, growing and having new experiences (Kaye et al, 1999:48). Freund (2006) shows that if employees feel that there are enough possibilities for career development within an organization, they may realise that leaving the organization is not a necessary step for developing a meaningful career.

Kaye et al (1999:48) explain that there are several moves within organisations that are possible with development and training. These include 1. lateral movement (where a breadth of experience is offered with the applying of a worker's current experience in a new job at the same level but with different duties or challenges), 2. realignment (which can involve moving downward to gain a better position for the next move), 3.

exploration (including temporary moves intended for researching other options), 4. enrichment (this includes refining of an employees expertise within their current position, thus enabling them to find depth in areas they really enjoy) and 5. relocation (which involves moving to another organisation due to having thought about all the options and realising that the next career step is to look elsewhere) (Kaye et al, 1999:53)

2.5.10 Performance reviews that develop the individual

Performance management is defined by Armstrong (2001:6) as ‘...a means of getting better results from a whole organisation by understanding and managing within an agreed framework, performance of planned goals, standards and competence requirements’. Both rewards and development of employees have already been recognised as retention strategies for social workers, however it is apparent that both of these aspects are dependant on performance reviews and appraisals. Du Toit (2004:31-32) shows that performance appraisals are expected to serve a number of purposes simultaneously. These are strategic purposes (which include linking employee activities with organisational goals), administrative purposes (which concern the use of performance data to make reward decisions, placement decisions, promotion and retrenchment and for validating selection procedures) and developmental purposes (which can be used to develop employees who are both effective and ineffective in their jobs by specifying performance levels and suggesting overall training needs).

Swanepoel (2003:372) defines performance appraisal as ‘a systematic and formal process by means of which the job-relevant strengths and weaknesses of employees are identified, observed, measured recorded and developed’. Kadushin (1992) defines evaluation as ‘...the objective appraisal of the workers’ total functioning on the job over a specified period of time’ (Kadushin, 1992:341). He adds that it is ‘a process of applying systematic procedures in order to determine with reliability and validity the extent to which the worker is achieving requirements’. It is concerned with both ‘quality of performance’ and ‘quantity of accomplishment’ and is ‘an administrative feature that can and should contribute to professional growth’.

Lewis, Lewis and Soufl (1991:135) show that measuring performance of professionals in the social service professions is a highly complicated task, because there are so many variables that play a role. Millar (1998:65) agrees with this and adds that this is 'compounded by the lack of hard objective measures'. He explains one major problem as being that much of a social worker's performance goes unobserved because of the '...nature of services rendered and the confidential nature of the employee-client relationship'. It is evident however, that performance appraisals are necessary for overall organisational employee retention.

2.5.11 Supervision

Kadushin (1992:22) has defined the role of a social work supervisor as 'an agency administrative staff member to whom authority is delegated to direct, coordinate, enhance and evaluate the on-the-job performance of the supervisees for whose work he is held accountable in implementing this responsibility. The supervisor performs administrative, educational and supportive functions in interaction with the supervisee in the context of a positive relationship. The supervisor's ultimate objective is to deliver to agency clients the best possible service, both quantitatively and qualitatively in accordance with agency policies and procedures. Supervisors do not directly offer service to the client, but they do indirectly affect the level of service offered through their impact on the direct service supervisees'.

Smith (2005) found in her research that a consistent finding was the important role of supervisors, and that dissatisfaction with supervision was generally the primary reason for worker turnover. The Jordan Institute for Families (1999:1) believes that supervision may be the most important factor in retention and cite that 'competent, supportive supervision is the single most important factor in an agency's or unit's ability to retain workers. If you find an agency with a stable work force, you will usually find excellent supervisors'. They show that social workers who remain in jobs are more likely to report that their supervisor is supportive, competent, approachable and willing to show appreciation and concern for their well being than those who are planning to leave.

Westbrook et al. (2006) show that many studies have linked the quality of direct supervision to public child welfare employee retention. Smith (2005) found that supervisor support would increase the likelihood of job retention even when other organizational and job factors are taken into account (i.e., supervisor support will have a direct positive effect on organizational commitment and job retention).

2.5.11.1 The functions of supervision

Social work supervision is facilitated by a series of short-term objectives formulated in terms of the three main functions of supervision (Hoffman, 1990). The short term function of administrative supervision is to provide the worker with a work context conducive to job effectiveness; that of education is to expand and refine the worker's knowledge and skills in order for them to work more effectively; and that of supportive supervision is to help the worker manage work stress which could interfere with effective service delivery (Hoffman, 1990; Kadushin, 1992).

Administration, education and support tend to be translated into complementary functions, each with its own set of specific knowledge and skills and all are ultimately necessary if the primary objective of supervision is to be achieved (Kadushin, 1992). The function of supportive leadership is where the supervisor has the responsibility of 'sustaining worker morale, helping with job-related discouragements and discontents, and giving supervisees a sense of worth as professionals, a sense of belonging in the agency and a sense of security in their performance' (Kadushin, 1992:19). The primary concern of administrative supervision is the correct, effective and appropriate implementation of agency policies and procedures, while the primary goal is to ensure adherence to policy and procedure (Kadushin, 1992).

The primary concern of educational supervision is to deal with increasing the worker's knowledge, attitudes and skills required to do their job, and the primary goal is to dispel ignorance and upgrade skill (Kadushin, 1992). This function is different to staff development and in service training. It works as a supplement to them by individualising general learning in application to the specific performance of the individual worker (Kadushin, 1992).

2.5.11.2 Types of supervision

Watson (1973) gives examples of six different types of supervisory models that have been experimented with in order to ensure that supervisees are given the best supervision possible. The first is the tutorial model, which consists of a supervisor and supervisee in a one-to-one relationship. This model is most useful for inexperienced workers as it involves close monitoring of their performance. The second is case consultation, which is also on a one-to-one basis, and there is usually a designated consultant with whom the worker schedules contacts when needed (Watson, 1973). There is a heavy teaching component with the consultant cast in the role of teacher and it is his/her job to review the situation presented, offer a point of view and explain his/her opinions. The third model is that of the supervisory group where there is a designated supervisor and a group of supervisees (Watson, 1973). For it to be successful, the workers in the group should not be too diverse in their levels of training or experience and should have common areas of ignorance. Group supervision tends to allow a wider selection of learning experiences to be undertaken and helps to develop a sense of professional identity. (Thomlinson, Rogers, Collins & Grinnel, 1996).

The fourth model is the peer group discussion, where there is no designated supervisor and all the members of the group participate as equals and must share common areas of competence (Watson, 1973). Members meet on a regular basis and the agenda is decided upon by mutual agreement. Tandem supervision is the fifth model, and developed out of the peer group model (Watson, 1973). It operates when group members want to function apart from the group with fewer planned contacts. It consists of two members, neither of whom is designated as a supervisor and both of whom are experienced workers and who respect the ability and opinions of the other. They meet informally whenever they have a case for consideration and tend to choose a case on which discussion is focussed in their time together. The team is the final model under discussion, where membership is deliberately varied as much as possible within an agency structure. Ultimately, variety helps further the goal of the agency, which is to meet the clients' needs through ensuring that employees are supervised as best as possible (Watson, 1973). Good supervision should ultimately decrease worker dissatisfaction that could lead to turnover (Smith, 2005).

2.5.12 A lesser degree of formalization

Westbrook et al, (2006) state that a general finding in their studies is that workers tend to feel devalued and at the lowest level of a bureaucratic, impersonal hierarchical organization that is unresponsive to their needs. Sunter (2007:7) believes that younger generations are more individualistic and become more quickly frustrated with bureaucracy than their forebears. 'They need space to be entrepreneurs and will leave organizations which don't grant them the extra degrees of freedom they expect'.

Kaye et al (1999:39) show that people resign from organisations when there are rigid work place rules. These particularly apply to rules that cause unbearable family stress, and talented employees have been found to look for employers that offer child care facilities or subsidies, flexible work schedules, job sharing, eldercare assistance and extensive and creative maternity (even paternity) leave programs. (Kaye et al, 1999) believe that it is important to ask employees what would make their lives easier to make them more committed.

Kaye et al (1999:39) also believe that management needs to be careful about their attitudes towards employees and be aware of their specific prejudices as they 'mentor, coach, promote, reward, punish and hire'. Employees need to feel respected, and trusted. When employees are trusted, most will be trustworthy. They will feel honoured and respected when they are trusted with important tasks and heavy responsibilities and when allowed do things their way (Kaye et al, 1999:39). All of these should go a long way toward retaining social work staff.

2.6 Conclusion

Chapter 2 contains a review of relevant literature surrounding the issue of social work as a scarce skill in South Africa. It discusses the problem as well as aspects evident in organisations that are retaining staff successfully. These can be used as 'retention strategies' and include increasing commitment, increasing job satisfaction, improving leadership, motivation and rewards, decreasing stress and burnout issues, adaptation of work content, adaptation of working conditions and resources, increasing levels of security, fair remuneration and employee benefits, ensuring staff development and training, performance reviews that develop individuals, improved supervision and a

lesser degree of formalisation. The following chapter will discuss the research methodology used in this study.

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CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on the methodology utilised in this study. Babbie and Mouton (2004: 647) define research methodology as explaining ‘the methods, techniques and procedures that are employed in the process of implementing the research design or research plan, as well as the underlying principles and assumptions that underlie their use’. Following will be a description of the aims, methods and procedures used in this study. It will look at the sampling process and decisions surrounding this process as well as the data collection procedure that was followed. It will address some of the ethical dilemmas that the researcher faced while conducting this research and look at how data was analysed. It will end with a description of the research limitations.

3.2 Research Design

This research has adopted a qualitative research design. Qualitative research is defined as ‘a multi-perspective approach to social interaction, aimed at describing, making sense of, interpreting or reconstructing this interaction in terms of the meanings that the subjects attach to it’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998: 2). The qualitative research design was chosen as it allows the researcher to discover in-depth information through descriptions and understandings of research participants, which are ‘sufficiently detailed descriptions of data in context...with sufficient detail and precision’ (Babbie & Mouton, 2004:270). The researcher wanted to collect large amounts of data, quickly, but also to have depth in the data (Greef, 2002) and to be able to immediately focus on the substance of the findings and further these findings.

3.3 Population

The term research ‘population’ refers to ‘individuals in the universe who possess specific characteristics’ important to a particular study (Arkava & Lane, cited in Strydom & De Vos, 1998: 191). The population of this study comprised all registered and government-funded non-governmental organisations in the Cape Town Metropolitan area employing five or more social workers. The researcher approached the Department of Social Development for a list of all the registered, government-funded non-profit organisations in the Western Cape. There are 217 NGO’s in this

number that are categorised as Welfare Organisations (Brink, 2007). The researcher then contacted each of the NGO's to establish which of these employed five or more social workers. There were 15 in total. These were a range of local, provincial and national organisations that varied in terms of size, structure and area of service. Twelve of the fifteen organisations approached to be interviewed participated in the research, making a total response rate of 87%.

3.4 Data collection strategy

Face-to-face interviews were chosen as the method of collecting data for this study, using a semi-structured interview schedule (See Appendix D). Greef (2002:292) defines qualitative interviews as 'attempts to understand the world from the participant's point of view, to unfold the meanings of people's experiences [and] to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations'.

Robson (1993:237) explains that when interviewers use semi-structured interviews, they generally have a 'shopping list of topics and want to get responses to them, but as a matter of tactics they have greater freedom in the sequencing of questions, in their exact wording, and in the amount of time and attention given to different topics'. Berg (1998:61) adds to this by saying that 'questions are typically asked of each interviewee in a systematic and consistent order, but the interviewers are allowed freedom to digress, that is, the interviewers are permitted (in fact expected) to probe far beyond the answers to their prepared and standardized questions'.

The researcher interviewed a management representative from each of the 12 NGO's. The interview structure was designed by the author and all interviews were taped using a dictaphone and transcribed. It was hoped that each interview would not take more than an hour but as it turned out some took as long as 2 hours where certain respondents had detailed responses to the topic.

3.5 Data analysis strategy:

The data in this research was analysed by using an adaptation of Tech's (1990, as cited by De Vos, 2002: 343) eight steps for qualitative research. This meant that transcriptions were read through a number of times while notes were taken. These

notes were then used to identify themes and categories, which emerged from the text. These themes and categories were then compared and categorised according to literature.

3.6 Limitations

There are a number of possible limitations applicable to this study:

3.6.1 The research design

- A limitation of the qualitative research design is that the respondents' behaviours are not open to 'exact explanation, prediction or control' (Babbie & Mouton, 2004:279). This would have been evident in this study.
- Qualitative research depends on the honesty of participants and this could influence the reliability of findings.

3.6.2 Data Collection

- Greef (2002) explains the limitation of interviewing as a data collection tool as being that interviews involve personal interaction and thus cooperation is a prerogative. The respondents interviewed might not have been willing to share everything or the interviewer may not have asked the right questions to evoke the desired responses.

3.6.3 Data analysis:

- A limitation of analysis in the qualitative research design is that a high level of interpretation is involved. Due to the subjective nature of such research; multiple meanings could be derived from the data and cannot be exactly duplicated (Strydom & De Vos, 1998). There is also always the possibility that the researcher can overlook or minimise certain constructs that should be given more attention.

3.6.4 Researcher:

- As the researcher is a social worker who has been working in the area encompassed by the Cape Metropolitan area and is familiar with the organisations in the area it was difficult for her to maintain complete objectivity.

- Research question construction could lead to bias, the researcher particularly noticed that at times she may have asked leading questions or asked questions differently to obtain the information she was seeking.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter gave a summary of the methodology used in this research. It gave a description of the research design, sampling strategy, data collection and data analysis. The limitations of the study were also described. The following chapter presents and discusses the findings of this study.

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CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the 12 in-depth interviews conducted with the respondents, as well as the one page survey for extra information on the organisations' social worker turnover. The results are presented with reference to three major themes and their related categories, supported by direct quotations from the original transcripts. Findings are discussed in a narrative style and sub categories are contextualised within the framework of relevant literature and research already done in the field.

4.1 Profile of Respondents

This research studied the fifteen welfare organisations in the Cape Metropolitan area with five or more social workers attached to them. These were a range of local, provincial and national organisations that varied in terms of size, structure and area of service. Each respondent represented and spoke on behalf of the organisation of which they were the director. These respondents were varied in terms of age, race and their number of years of experience in the NGO sector. Some of the following fields of social work were encompassed by this research: Counselling with children, Crime prevention, Educational programmes, Community projects, Work with rape and abuse of women, Prevention of child abuse and neglect, Work with the physically disabled, Rehabilitation of offenders, Work with Cancer, Statutory work with children and teenagers, Work with alcohol and substance abuse, Work with epilepsy, Work with families, Counselling for mental health issues, Face-to-face counselling, Bereavement counselling, Trauma de-briefing and HIV/AIDS counselling.

4.2 Analysis and discussion of findings according to themes:

** Please note that the respondents are quoted verbatim and grammatical errors are not corrected.*

The following table presents the framework used for analysing the data

Table 1: Framework for analysis

Research Objectives	Research Questions	Themes	Categories	Sub-Categories
Objective 1 To explore the perceptions of NGO management regarding social work as a scarce skill	What are the perceptions of NGO management regarding social work as a scarce skill?	Theme 1 Respondents perceptions of social work being a scarce skill	1.1 Number of social workers in South Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough in South Africa • Not enough in NGO's • Necessity for increased government subsidization
			1.2 Scarce skill declaration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of the declaration • Perceptions of the declaration • Uncertainty regarding the Department of Social Developments retention policy and its implementation • Government and NGO partnership needed
Objective 2 To ascertain the perceptions of NGO management concerning turnover of their social workers	What are the perceptions of NGO management concerning turnover of their social workers?	Theme 2 Respondents perceptions of turnover of social workers	2.1 Turnover rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High turnover rates • Generational aspects to turnover
			2.2 Why social workers are leaving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Necessity of exit interviews • Reasons why social workers leave organisations
			2.3 Turnover implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on client system • Difficulty finding suitable or appropriately skilled social workers • High costs associated with turnover • Difficulties associated with vacant posts
Objective 3 To investigate the strategies NGO's employ in order to retain their social work staff	What strategies are being used by NGO management to retain their social workers?	Theme 3 Strategies employed by NGO's to retain social work staff	3.1 Organisational policy regarding social worker retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need for policies and strategies regarding retention
			3.2 Content and nature of social work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High work load • Enjoyment of the work
			3.3 Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal security • Job security/contract • Legal security
			3.4 Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory Resources • Inadequate resources
			3.5 Networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive and negative external relationships

			3.6 Stress and Burnout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of stress and burnout • Prevention and management of stress and burnout • Compensation for stress and burnout • Staff coping mechanisms • Management coping mechanisms
			3.7 Reputation of social work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of social works' reputation in South Africa • How perceptions of social works' reputation could affect social workers
			3.8 Job Satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors increasing job satisfaction
			3.9 Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of motivation • Intrinsic motivators
			3.10 Remuneration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions on what the salary amount should be • Fundraising for salaries • Subsidisation from government • Comparison of government and NGO salaries • Benefits offered to social workers
			3.11 Rewards and performance appraisals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of performance • Rewards for performance
			3.12 Staff development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation programs/period • Development and career growth • Training • Decision-making freedom
			3.13 Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision times • Functions of supervision • Types of supervision • Training of supervisors
			3.14 Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency and information sharing • Communication • Staff grievances and public complaints • Flexibility

Theme 1: Respondents perceptions of social work being a scarce skill

Note: The following fulfils the requirements of the first research objective: ‘To explore the perceptions of NGO management regarding social work as a scarce skill.’

4.2.1 Number of social workers in South Africa (Category 1.1)

Social work was declared a scarce skill in South Africa in 2003 (Kela, 2006). Eighty-three percent of respondents said that they believed that there are not sufficient numbers of practising social workers in South Africa to address its needs. Some were not entirely sure and careful not to make too generalised a statement. What they did say made it evident however that they were experiencing social workers to be in high demand and low supply.

Representative # 1 ‘...my gut instinct is no. Because of the problems we have in...getting people to respond to advertisements...either there are social workers and they not applying and they going to other streams or they’re going overseas or...I’m...mainly going on the fact that...before we had fifty people applying for the position and now you lucky if you get three or four.’

Representative #7 ‘All I know at this stage is that it’s becoming increasingly difficult to recruit social workers for vacant posts.’

Most respondents believed that they did not have enough practising social workers at their organisations. Some struggled to assign workers to clients and the demand was greater than most felt they could meet.

Representative #1 ‘We don’t have a social worker in [one area] so we have an auxiliary worker and they have to cover the entire area around [this] office. And if you looking at your distances that’s not very practical... how much can one person do?’

Respondents mentioned that the Department of Social Development decides on how many posts an organisation can have and only funds salaries for this number. One respondent stated that they would love to expand their services if they could, however they were restricted by the subsidy formulae received from government.

Most organisations used networking and community structures to assist their social workers and it was evident that these were essential for most NGO's to function.

Many respondents felt that their organisations needed more social workers but when asked whether government should subsidise more posts, opinions varied. Some felt that they would still struggle to fill the posts due to social worker scarcity. One felt that it seemed that government is in competition with NGO's (*Respondent #1*). Others felt that there were other factors to take into consideration such as sustainability.

Representative # 3 'We do find that social work services are the least financially sustainable services... too large branches ... puts a tremendous strain on the management committees... its not only a question of just adding up because the subsidy that government gives isn't enough to make a post sustainable'.

The results mostly agree with authors such as Kela (2006) who state that there are too few social workers in South Africa. Overall, NGO's seem to be doing what they can to remain operational and ensure that they meet their organisational goals, but it is evident that there is more they could do with increased resources and the necessary social worker numbers.

4.2.2 Scarce skill declaration (Category 1.2)

All respondents were aware that Social Work had been declared a scarce skill in South Africa. One commented that they experience this reality intensely and that it is '...out of hand' (*Representative # 3*). All seemed to think that it was positive that the scarcity had finally been acknowledged.

Representative # 7 'There's really an acknowledgement and a recognition for the social work profession, that it's valued, it's you know, I think that's the positive part of that.'

Representative # 8 'Attention is being drawn to the fact that it is a scarce skill and that government and academics and everybody else must get involved in order to ensure that we have sufficient people who are trained.'

By introducing the Draft Recruitment and Retention Policy in 2006, government has also acknowledged the scarcity of social worker skills. All but one respondent had heard of this policy, however only one respondent had read it. Overall, most respondents were uncertain about what the policy entailed.

Representative # 8 'It's difficult to engage government... the way things are now, we don't get communication from government around what their plan is, whether there's going to be incremental increase or whether there's going to be like we all on the same level now.'

Representative # 6 'We were scared that it would only cover social workers for government. But after further discussions and on a provincial level also looking at this strategy, I think, you know, that they also take into account that this draft can't only, make provision for government. They do need the NGO's.'

The Draft Recruitment and Retention Policy (2006) makes arrangements for males to receive scholarships to study social work. Most respondents were aware of this but they did not seem to be aware of the particular retention strategies in the policy or have plans to try to implement them in their NGO's. When asked if they thought that the policy affected NGO's or their NGO in particular, results varied.

Representative # 3 'I think it's a very one-sided policy, especially as it was created for government and it's not really applicable for NGO's.'

Overall, respondents felt that the policy would affect their organisations in a negative manner:

Representative # 4 'I think its killing NGO's, because the better their benefits and especially the bursaries, the more difficult it becomes for the NGO's to recruit and to retain social workers ... I know of one institution where at this stage a third of the students have bursaries. So the more bursaries and the more bursary obligations they have, they won't be available for the NGO sector, unless the department changes the bursary obligations.'

Representative # 1 'It would have been a kinder gesture if those bursaries could be distributed among the NGO's as well and say you know we offering you a bursary and in return you have these workers coming into your organisations as well. But the way it is, it's a bit uneven... I think the benefits is all to the government...'

Some respondents questioned how effectively the policy would be implemented.

Representative # 2 'We must just remember that it's a 4 year study we study. So if we already start to give people bursaries now to start their studies we will only get the first people 4 years from now. What happens between now and the years until they get into the profession. We still sit with a very limited scarce skill and the people that have to go on...So you've got a backlog and I don't think you going to solve the problem in 4 years.'

All respondents believed specific policies on social worker retention were needed in South Africa but many emphasised that there must be a link between NGO and government strategies and that partnerships are necessary.

Representative # 4 'I think that government and organisations should have a shared policy. It shouldn't be just a strategy for government and one for the NGO sector on their own, there must be joint strategy.'

Representative # 10 'The government of the day is responsible for providing community service to the whole ...But I also feel that together with us and it mustn't be that blaming and shaming, you know it must be how are we going to together look at a situation. You know the same salaries ... I think it must be a plan that together we can do, solve the problem, and not just from government's side... [And we should be equal with government] 'We doing the same work.'

A recent study shows that government has also acknowledged the need for such a partnership in that it recommends that government needs to do something to assist the NGO sector (Brink, 2007).

Theme 2: Respondents perceptions of turnover of social workers

Note: The following fulfils the requirements of the second research objective: 'To ascertain the perceptions of NGO management concerning turn over of their social workers'.

4.2.3 Respondents perceptions of social worker turnover (Category 2.1)

Respondents indicated that their organisations had high rates of social worker turnover. On average turnover rates were 46% (see Appendix E). Many respondents mentioned that social workers did not work for their organisation for more than 2 or 3

years. Some commented that employees had been known to leave before they had even settled into the organisation.

Representative # 1 'They come in and they go just through the induction process and we go through all that effort of interviewing, of appointing, of spending money and advertising and ... then they go...'

A few respondents mentioned that social worker turnover seems to have a cyclical nature where for a long time no one leaves and then a whole lot of people leave.

Representative # 6 '...at times we had a staff turnover of about 40%. Then it has been reduced a few years ago to about 15%. At the moment if we talking about our previous financial year it was again like 40%.'

It was also pointed out that a large amount of movement takes place among the younger, more inexperienced workers, while older workers seem more settled. When looking at turnover and movement, quite a number of respondents mentioned that there is a difference between the young social workers of today and the social workers of old. One respondent referred to the popular theory of the 'millennium generation' and mentioned that the social workers from this generation have a different mentality towards life and how they view problems.

Representative # 4 'Those social workers who have stayed are definitely of another generation'.

Others referred to the fact that social workers of old seemed more committed:

Representative # 6 'There's no commitment from the young social workers... we have to give a lot of input to the new social workers. The older social workers made a commitment and they sometimes stay... but the young ones just go where they want to, money, money, money.'

Representative # 8 'I'm sorry to say if you talk about the old school and the new school...the new school would be looking more at self gratification, in terms of their career, in terms of money...Not so much as to what they can add value to the profession ... there's lots of lack of commitment, creativity.'

Certain respondents did concede that 'it depends on individuals' (*Representative #3*) and that some of the complaints of younger social workers were justified.

Representative # 10 'They make their needs known...people always say they come in and they complain about everything, you know salaries and so and I think why shouldn't they, i mean you have studied, you do have a right to it and I mean, if you going to go to work in a factory they going to give you all the equipment you need ...'

Representative # 2 'I don't blame them because if a youngster must pay R3000 for a bachelors flat to rent or must pay a 5 or 6000 rand for a bond to buy a small house, I don't blame them for going for the higher salary.'

These findings tend to parallel literature which shows that turnover of social workers in the Western Cape is problematic. Brink (2007) found that 72% of 158 government-funded organisations surveyed reported that their staff turnover had increased in the period 2000-2007 and that some turnover rates were as high as 50%. More general studies show that this high level of turnover is to be expected and that this is a problem not only in South Africa but internationally too (Westbrook et al, 2006). The trend that certain respondents mentioned with regard to a '...new breed of social worker' can also be seen to be expected (Codrington, 1998). The Cape Argus (2007:14) refers to the fact that the new generation of employee has a different view of the world and does things very differently, resulting in a reshaping of the work environment.

4.2.4 Why social workers are leaving (Category 2.2)

Reasons given for social workers leaving tended to be based on respondents' perceptions, as most organisations did not conduct confidential exit interviews. Sixty six percent of respondents said that they tried to conduct exit interviews but out of this number only a third had the interviews conducted by an external person with guaranteed confidentiality. This makes it difficult to know whether they had the correct information as social workers who were leaving might or might not have had the time, motivation or courage to tell the whole truth on why they were leaving. Most respondents seemed to see the value in conducting exit interviews.

Representative # 3 'When the social workers leave there's a lot of valuable information going out and people, it's a little bit of standing back situation and they much more honest and creative sometimes.'

One respondent whose organisation's exit interviews were confidential mentioned that it is sometimes easier to speak to an unknown person. Another explained that there was sometimes a difficulty in conducting exit interviews at all, even if they wanted to.

Representative # 2 'In our case here they will resign ... we pay bonuses in the end of November and normally when I walk into the office on the 1st of December there's an envelope on my desk.'

Ahlrichs (2000) highlights the importance of interviewing people when they leave an organisation and ensuring that these interviews are confidential.

As already mentioned, the reasons why social workers leave that were cited among the respondents generally pertained to financial aspects.

Representative # 1 'Better salaries, that's actually reason one, two and three.'

Other factors that were acknowledged and listed were work conditions, change in life circumstances, family responsibilities, going overseas, better prospects, going to work for government, high case loads, many job openings for social workers in urban areas, lack of recognition, areas of organisation operation, not feeling safe, and lack of opportunities for growth and development. These aspects were all covered in other sections of the interview schedule.

Fifty percent of respondents thought that significant numbers of social workers were leaving the country and 66% believed that they were leaving the profession. Those who were unsure stated that in their experience workers who left them were not leaving to go overseas. Some felt that qualified social workers did not enter the profession or that they left soon after entering it.

Representative # 2 'When they study social work they don't practise social work because... they study further or go into other, professions. Or they go into personnel, human resource

development...And then once they in the social work it also happens that they do social work for a time then they leave the profession to do some other work because they got the training as far as psychology, sociology all these things is concerned. They get taken up by the private sector.'

Certain authors such as Lombard (2006) and Kela (2006) indicate that many social workers are leaving the county and the profession but these were not generally listed by respondents as major reasons for turnover.

Most respondents viewed workers who stayed in their jobs as more committed than others and more specifically, committed to the ideals and objectives of their particular organisation.

Representative # 1 'Very committed to the objectives of the organisation and to the clients that they serving and to the communities that they network with...Irrespective of what benefits are being offered elsewhere.'

This sense of commitment to an organisation is noted by Freund (2005) and Ellis and Ellet (2003) as cited by Smith (2005), who found that commitment to a career was related to organisational commitment.

4.2.5 Turnover Implications (Category 2.3)

Findings show that high turnover is often very detrimental to organisations. These implications vary from organisational lack of capacity, having to hire job seekers not suitable for a job and even not being able to fill vacant posts.

4.2.5.1 Impact on Client system

Most respondents mentioned that when there is a high turnover of their social workers, their client system tends to suffer and the capacity of the organisation to deliver their service is decreased.

Representative # 4 'The communities get sick of seeing yet another face and another face. There are some clients who do not want to speak to the social workers anymore they prefer to speak to the managers because we don't have that high turnover in our management component.'

Representative # 2 'You just get used to this person and tell your whole life story and work out your relevant plan and you see the future with this person. 6 months later there's a new person. How many people must our clients still get used to and then it's the whole story, the whole things starts over again. Now I want to know what is the effect of that on the clients ... I don't want to see a new doctor or a dentist every 6 months.'

Westbrook et al (2006:39) explain that when clients have to move from worker to worker, 'understanding of clients' unique situations, rapport and trust deteriorate, and important case decisions may be delayed as new workers attempt to sift the details of complex cases'.

4.2.5.2 Not being able to find suitable or appropriately skilled social workers

An alarmingly high percentage of respondents said that they had found themselves hiring a person who was not the best person for the job because there was no one else.

Representative # 6 'It often happens nowadays'.

Representative # 4 'We do not have the selection or the luxury of choice anymore. If the person has the potential to do the work well in two years time or so then we say we take it and we will develop whatever potential there is to get the person or social worker on par or any other staff there are other cases in our organisation as well.'

Those respondents that stated that they would keep a post open until they found someone who was right for the position were generally representing specialised organisations that did not have statutory caseloads. It is evident that a high percentage of respondents felt they would take anyone that they could train. Very few said that they tried to match people to jobs in order to give the best possible service to their clients and in order for their workers to be happy. Fewer still indicated that they advertised for the specific skills they were looking for and generally got them.

Representative # 3 'At this specific stage I really want to say anyone will do...we can't afford to specialise very much with the vacancies we have at this stage...it's a luxury at this stage.'

The fact that social work is a scarce skill means there is a high demand for workers and a low supply of them. Respondents were asked how quickly and easily their social workers were replaced after they left. Most respondents said that they struggled to find workers. One organisation mentioned that it could take up to 8 months

(representative 2), another 9 months (representative 6), and another 15 months (representative 4).

Representative # 10 'There was last year also this year I've actually had to employ an auxiliary social worker because I had to have somebody in the post.'

4.2.5.3 High costs associated with turnover

All of the organisations recognised that the cost of turnover is high and that ways need to be found to reduce it. Costs that were noted by respondents were continually being in a stage of orientation with programs standing still, having to pay to train individuals, costs of advertising, client dissatisfaction, interviews and time spent on interviewing, contacting references, etc. Respondents also mentioned that turnover affects staff morale through the loss of team members, friendships and people to carry out the necessary work.

Representative # 10 'It does affect staff morale, not just for the social workers but for the whole organisation is affected and this year I really that we really have to work very hard towards the staff morale...I actually realised the impact it had on me because I think I had to keep it going people are working and its like we really like a family.'

4.2.5.4 Difficulties associated with vacant posts

Many respondents mentioned that when their organisations had vacancies the workload was distributed between other social workers or supervisors. Those that did not do this used other ways instead such as to hire contract workers and to put programs on hold.

Representative # 2 'We've got a locum policy, um, if we can we get some other social workers to help out then we do that or otherwise we employ locums.'

Most respondents acknowledged that having vacant posts led to many problems and said that they tried to advertise vacant posts immediately. Some tried to first advertise internally due to the expense of advertising while others mentioned that they sometimes had no response to job advertisements.

Representative # 9 'I've been in a management/ supervisory role for about 12 years now... 10 years ago, if one put an advert in the paper for a social work position, one would get 30 or 40

applicants... Earlier this year, I got absolutely none, not one application for the social work position. Okay, so that's an indication of what a crisis it is and having a post that needs to be filled...we had one application from somebody who was a nurse, not even a social worker.'

It is of interest that some organisations struggle more than others to fill their posts. There seems to be a hierarchy in terms of organisations that social workers most want to work for and that they do not merely move to government when they leave, but also to other NGO's. Some of the NGO's are evidently much stricter in terms of requiring specific criteria such as a certain amount of experience from their workers while others have to 'take what they can get'. This is similar to what is noted by Michaels et al (2001) who state that certain organisations cannot choose their employees because they lack applicants for positions.

Other authors have found similar problems in the areas of service delivery, the ability to fill vacant posts and the cost of turnover. Briede and Loffell (2005) found that in many Child Welfare organisations throughout South Africa, social workers are found to be continually working with crises and new referrals and thus do not have time for other aspects of their jobs such as therapeutic intervention, support and permanency planning. This can be directly linked to high turnover rates and vacant posts. The Jordan Institute for Families (1999) also found that when agencies lack adequate staff, caseloads and stress levels increase for those workers who stay behind. They cite chronic stress, emotional exhaustion, and being overworked as factors that negatively affect social worker retention.

Michaels et al (2001) show that when there is high turnover, organisations can struggle to replace workers and may thus be forced to hire someone not suitable for the job. Ahlrichs (2000:16), Westbrook et al (2006) and Kaye and Jordan-Evans (1999) note the costs of turnover to include the above problems as well as those mentioned in the literature review section, specifically focussing on those related to financial costs, time, employee motivation and loss of organisational knowledge. Brink (2007) mentions the fact that due to the nature of social work, when there are vacancies the work still needs to be done and when workers are already overloaded this can add even more strain and stress on them (Brink, 2007).

It is positive that despite the high turnover levels in many of the organisations, most of the respondents felt that when social workers left they would be good promoters and advertisements for their organisations and that they left happy. Some mentioned that workers recommended jobs by word of mouth and social workers even occasionally came back, either to work or just to visit. Ahlrichs (2000) shows that negative advertising is detrimental to organisations and dissatisfied employees can bring the name of an organisation down.

4.2.5.5 Theme 3: Strategies employed by NGO's to retain social work staff

Note: The following fulfils part of the requirements of the third research objective: 'To investigate the strategies NGO's employ in order to retain their social work staff'.

4.2.6 Organisational policy regarding social worker retention (Category 3.1)

When asked whether their organisation had a specific policy regarding social worker retention, only two respondents answered in the affirmative. All but one respondent said that they saw the need to have a policy for social worker retention and that there were plans to introduce one in the future. Representatives' reasons for not having a policy at the time were mainly financial. Some recognised that there were aspects other than finances to take into consideration.

Representative # 8 '... its something that we've built into other policies, ... the rest of our policies would be bringing in all the other issues on how to support, how to develop, how to keep, deal, to keep the person here. Looking at job profiles, looking at their strengths, matching it with what is needed from your organisation and not putting the person in the post purely because there's something to do.'

While most of the organizations did not have specific policies or even strategies aimed at retention, most were engaging in certain actions that could be used for retention of their workers. Retention policies and strategies do not only have to include monetary aspects and can be based on other reasons why staff remain in their jobs such as the intrinsic reward of appreciation of the value of their work (Smith, 2005).

4.2.7 Content and nature of social work (Category 3.2)

4.2.7.1 High work load

Briede and Loffell (2007) show that social workers in South Africa generally have work loads that are too high. High workloads were evident in many of the statutory organisations. When asked how they set limits on the work load of their social workers, some respondents said that they could not and that it was completely determined by intake levels. Specialised organisations did not have caseloads as such and this meant that they could generally choose the amount of work that they would do, even if it meant having waiting lists. They mostly had clients schedule appointments and focussed on in-depth counselling and quality over quantity.

Representative # 11 '...you can't say for example that there's a specific amount of cases per worker because we are allocated a certain number of social workers for a specific geographical area... You see, we're not automatically, like we've got to make sure that even if we've only got two social workers to a million people... [that they are] equally distributed.'

Seventy-five percent of respondents felt that the social workers at their organisations had more work than they were able to do comfortably.

Representative # 10 'We've got waiting lists, as long as my arm.'

When asked how they could reduce the workload of the social workers, some felt that this was not possible without compromising the service standard and quality. Others had ways that they thought it best to work such as using different intervention models besides individual casework such as group work and community work. Certain respondents mentioned focussing on the core business of the organisation and helping the social workers only do professional aspects of the work. One way to do this was to have other categories of workers such as volunteers covering non-core business functions.

Representative # 6 'One should look what is really your core business ... And take away the dead wood, um, whereby we sometimes have 150 cases but you only active on 80 cases...'

Representative # 7 'We have started now with a system which we call sessional workers... after they have been volunteers for one year; we can then also consider employing them as a sessional worker for specific projects.'

These findings seem to agree with research such as that done by Brink (2007) who found that social workers had too much work and case loads that were too high, Govender (2007:13) who reported a social worker as having too much work to give clients quality service and Skweyiya (2007) who cites the problem of overburdened social workers as leading to burnout, poor quality of services and limited ability to meet service delivery demands.

4.2.7.2 Enjoyment of the work

There was a lack of consensus between respondents regarding whether or not social workers actually enjoy the content and nature of their work. Answers from statutory organisations tended to be more negative than specialised organisations as respondents tended to feel that statutory work was particularly emotionally draining. One respondent mentioned social workers not enjoying aspects such as court work and having to work with crisis situations.

Respondents felt social workers did not enjoy administration aspects such as statistics, management responsibilities such as budgets and proposal writing, training, working with sexual abuse and trauma, not getting feedback from government regarding plans, not being able to choose who to work with and too much statutory intervention, particularly if it involved lawyers.

Specialised organisations were generally more positive.

Representative # 2 'I think despite [problems] that we've got a lot of them that enjoy their job and that they contribute to the field that we work in. It's a specialised field with a wide scope and a wide variety of things and that's very stimulating.'

Thompson et al (1994) agree that there are certain aspects related to the content and nature of social work that are not enjoyable for social workers, namely pressures associated with social work, the immense demands and complexities of the work and the pain, distress and suffering brought about by crisis, loss, abuse, poverty, social

problems and oppression which can leave a mark on the worker involved. Kadushin (1992) explains some aspects of the nature of social work that impact social workers on a personal level. These include great risks of guilt, anxiety, discouragement and frustration, great responsibilities and limited and ambiguous solutions to problems (Kadushin, 1992).

4.2.8 Security (Category 3.3)

4.2.8.1 Personal Security

Some respondents felt that their workers did not feel physically safe. Many felt that this was a part of the social workers job, a risk that social workers take when they enter the profession and that while they did not have a choice they could 'minimize risks' (*Representative #8*).

Representative # 9 'There are times when social workers have to go into situations, I mean, they all women...where it might be late in the afternoon or in the evening...so, ya, they are at risk... And also, go into, into a home, where somebody may be having a psychotic episode and has a propensity for violence.'

A few mentioned that working in South Africa has risks associated to it regardless of the profession. Some explained incidents that had occurred in the past related to security.

Representative # 11 '...The guy was shot...The social worker [dead]...He was in an interview with his client and the guy took a gun and shot him. That's only because... He only got the case afterwards. The previous social worker had removed his child and he was angry with the social workers.'

Representative # 6 '...there was a group of I think two or three clients or persons presented themselves as clients and then they entered the building and produced fire arms and robbed our staff and it was a very traumatic experience and we had to deal with that and we specifically upgraded that security system.'

Most organisations had measures in place to combat the occurrence of negative incidences. Included in the list were giving their social workers work cell phones, alarm systems, electronic fencing, locked gates, teaching staff about safety tips, not

having offices in dangerous areas, not expecting workers to go into volatile areas and having good relationships with the communities in which they worked.

4.2.8.2 Job Security

Many respondents indicated that within the social welfare sector employees can never be completely guaranteed of jobs as funding is never guaranteed.

Representative # 2 'Can you ever in the NGO sector that depends on donations and fund raising... I don't think they safe in terms of job security because we do have staff that's on a contract basis because the funding is not in place but because we need the hands... There's not security in that.'

Aspects that the respondents felt helped the workers feel more secure were: being part of an umbrella organization; having regular performance appraisals with feedback; and being permanently placed in positions. While most of the organisations stated that the majority of their workers were in permanent positions, most also employed contract workers some of the time and felt that these social workers would rather be in permanent positions if they could be. Comments in relation to this were that it is always best to start workers on a probation period due to labour law regulations. One mentioned that those workers on contract normally left before their contract expired as they found permanent jobs. One mentioned that contract workers were more affordable due to the organisation not having to pay their benefits.

Representative # 11 'We haven't got money for that. That's why they on contract. For a specific task...It makes more sense to keep them on contract...Otherwise you can't afford it.'

4.2.8.3 Legal Security

Some of the respondents indicated that their workers did not always feel secure in terms of legal aspects, particularly when working with statutory cases.

Representative # 3 'I think that's getting increasingly difficult because of the rights issue, and we do find that the client system is increasingly...complaining about them... making allegations to the SA Council.'

It was mentioned that a function of supervision is to help the social workers feel more secure in terms of decisions that could have legal repercussions. When asked if their

staff were safe in terms of legal liability, answers were often vague. Some mentioned that they did not cover their workers legally and that the workers were supposed to take out insurance or professional indemnity personally through the Council for Social Work Professions. However, most of organisations had some type of indemnity insurance for all of their workers. Most felt that if the situation was due to the social workers own incompetence it was their own responsibility to deal with the consequences.

When asked what would happen if their social workers were in work-related trouble with the law, most of the organisations said that they would assist because their employees act on their behalf.

Representative # 4 'The organisation has a very good insurance policy so that would obviously kick in the policy...The organisation will do everything that is possible to assist the social worker.'

Michaels et al (2001) show that personal safety, job security and legal security are all important considerations in retention theory. While most respondents acknowledged that these were important, they often felt that there was very little that they could do to change the situation and that they were doing all that they could. The Jordan Institute for Families (1999) found one of the ways to retain workers was to address liability concerns by determining if social workers could be provided with professional liability insurance to allay fears about liability. Brink's (2007) study found crime and insecurity to be some of the reason why social workers were leaving their jobs while Westbrook et al (2006) also list issues of personal safety as one of the chief reasons for turnover of social workers.

4.2.9 Resources (Category 3.4)

4.2.9.1 Mandatory resources

Resources that respondents listed as essential were infrastructure, technology, own telephone, own computer, own office (which is accessible, adequately furnished and comfortable), access to reliable motor vehicles and petrol (not having to use their own), space in terms of ensuring client confidentiality, security, necessary

administrative systems, training, supervision, support, good leave benefits, practical programs, and resources which could be used to benefit the client system (such as psychiatric inpatient facilities and medical care).

4.2.9.2 Inadequate resources

Inadequate working conditions that they believed were evident at their organisations were offices without all the necessary resources (such as enough furniture and computers), having to share an insufficient number of cars, cars that are old and constantly breaking down, limited space, having to share resources with other role players, overly large geographical areas and a lack of external role player resources (such as alcohol rehabilitation centres for clients that do not have the financial resources available).

Representative # 6 'People can't afford computers, they can't actually afford telephones because its too expensive to have telephones ...you can only afford one office and then three people must sit in one office...Its big areas that we need to service...they don't have reliable vehicles and they go out at night and there's no cell phone connection'

Not all social workers had their own or access to the essential resources mentioned by the respondents. Reasons given were that some offices were rural or had just recently been opened, that some of their workers worked in a different office every day and they could not rent that many offices, and that some of their workers were expected to use their own resources such as cars. Only one respondent indicated that they also provided cell phones for their workers. One respondent mentioned that if a social worker did not have a car, they could not be employed (*Respondent # 9*). Some mentioned that they had transport policies in place where they paid towards aspects such as insurance, petrol and limited maintenance of cars. One mentioned that they paid R3.24 per km that social workers drove in their own cars (*Representative # 10*).

Many of the organisations did not make use of modern technology and this could affect their efficiency and effectiveness. Two organisations did not have websites and most of those that did felt that the websites were not updated as often as they should be. Some respondents commented that they did not think they were updated at all because of lack of funding and expertise.

Most organisations reported that they made use of electronic databases, however half of these admitted to having a backlog and two thought that their systems were not as modern and effective as they should be. Organisations varied as to what they used their electronic databases for and who ran them.

Representative # 1 'Run from our national office ... we can access the data base, like the fund raising... the finance...At the moment we busy with a pilot... we looking at a client management system...what would happen is anybody would be able to access it so if a client comes here we would be able to see if the person was in [another office].'

Most respondents tended to agree with Ahlrichs, (2000) that when working it is essential to have the appropriate resources and that this makes everything more efficient and effective. Moos (1994) shows the importance of the working environment for employee satisfaction and this includes the aspects of system maintenance, innovation and physical comfort.

4.2.10 Networking (Category 3.5)

4.2.10.1 Positive and negative external relationships

Most respondents reported good working relationships with external role players and very few problems were noted. All respondents mentioned that they readily networked with other NGO's and most said that they were on a director's forum. The only negative comment was that sometimes NGO's were too concerned about themselves and didn't work together as much as they could.

Representative # 9 'Because we are a generic organisation, we deal with all areas of specialisation, so we have to work very closely with, um, homes for the aged, for facilities for psychiatric care, for, ya, substance abuse rehabilitation, so we really liaise all the time.'

Representative # 10'I feel that that's where people grow. You know when you network because it's a very stagnant environment and you also get the feel that you globally and not that little world that you are working in.'

Challenges related to the South African Police Service were not receiving requested support in dangerous situations and clients sometimes being handled without sensitivity. Most respondents mentioned that a good working relationship depended on the police station and who the station commander was.

Challenges related to networking with the Department of Social Development were unrealistic time frames, lack of consultation with NGO's, not enough open communication, a feeling of top down structures, and not always feeling a sense of partnership.

Representative # 7 'The money is public money that we working with. Um, its like they've paid us and don't bother us because we've got lots of work. It would be nice to have more open communication and not feel like I must, we must do what they tell us to do. Top down, its still very much top down.'

Representative # 10 '...access to head office... there are bigger issues that we can't talk to the districts, they've got no power.'

Representative # 3 'Unrealistic timeframes, no consultation before hand and that's what's really creating a lot of stress is they don't know what they want. They don't have the format available on the ground, you have to ask a thousand questions in that regard...at district offices as well. We find that they aren't a real unit at this stages so there's discrepancies between different procedures and individuals, um, but which ones we do have. They a really big funder on the one hand and yes we have to look at that but on the other the relationship is important because they not only a funder. They are buying services from us; we're rendering services for them.'

Those organisations who networked with the Education Department mentioned that they often struggled to get hold of them, that there was a lot of 'red tape' and that they did not easily get their cooperation. The struggle to place children in children's homes because they could not get them into schools that were near enough for transport purposes was also mentioned.

Representative # 3 'The problem that we have with them at this stage, that the social workers have with them, is that they are waiting too long, the schools specifically. Their systems isn't really in place in a lot of cases so what happens is in the end there's really a crisis where the

social worker comes in and we're the baddies and we have to handle everything. They could have done that beforehand. We also find that they are using us as they wish, um, the schools are using us to, um, to get absconders back and things like that which they should have actually handled so a lot of the time is actually wasted on things that the department of education could have done.'

Moos (1994) shows that relationship dimensions are of vital importance for a work environment that is conducive to employee well being. It is thus positive that most respondents reported good external relationships. Westbrook et al (2006) found in their study that it was important for local administrators to play a role of 'buffering agents' for their workers. They found that the relationship dimension in organizations are clearly vital to sustaining employees in difficult times, developing their commitment to child welfare, and enhancing employee longevity.

4.2.11 Stress and Burnout (Category 3.6)

4.2.11.1 Assessment of stress and burnout

Respondents all agreed that stress and burnout are huge problems in the social work profession. Two reported that they assessed their social workers for burnout on an ongoing basis. Most believed that it was the responsibility of supervisors and managers to monitor stress and burnout but did not have specific strategies in mind to do so.

4.2.11.2 Prevention and management of stress and burnout

Most respondents believed it was important for social workers to be trained in dealing with stress although some stated that high turnover made this problematic. Types of stress management training that they offered their social workers included putting them through courses such as stress management, having managers point out developmental needs, keeping an eye on absenteeism, bringing outside speakers in, like the Trauma Centre, and sending social workers on courses and workshops.

Aspects that respondents mentioned to prevent and contain stress and burnout were evaluating reasons for burnout when it happened, having outside consultants for debriefing and supervision, insisting that individuals took leave when they were

vulnerable to burnout, and allowing workers to be flexible with their time. Sixty-six percent said that they worked to train their social workers on burnout prevention.

Representative # 4 'That's part of the work of our social work services and as part of the support function that they have in supervision...I think it there's a good relationship and if they use it properly they will be able to pick it up if the social worker is showing signs of burnout... So I think that helps them a lot.'

4.2.11.3 Compensation for stress and burnout

Most respondents felt that there were aspects that they used as a form of compensation for stress and burnout of their social workers. Many mentioned the fact that they often allowed their staff extra leave such as a half-day once a month and long leave. Other aspects were good training benefits, supervision and support, and allowing staff to speak their minds.

Representative # 5 'The management of the leave benefits is quite good...Depending on their years, but if you've been here 10 years you get 30 days...It starts at 22 and then they get 24, 26, 28, 30. And you get long leave. You get long leave every 5 years... We're looking at a care for the carer programme for all our staff including our volunteers...'

Some respondents mentioned financial constraints as being the reason why they did not do anything to compensate for the stressful nature of their social workers' work. A few noted however that some of the things that could be done were not dependant on money. These included organising team events and being flexible with time.

Representative # 8 'When we do our strat[egic] planning, I will make sure that we go away... we've got a little entertainment committee... and on a Friday afternoon if we can, once a month, have a little braai at the back ... or alternatively I do have a lot of managers meetings at my house particularly, and then after that it's lunch and just socialising.'

Seventy five percent of respondents felt that their social workers sometimes faced an inability to meet service delivery demands due to stress. Most had ways that they assisted social workers if this was the case including managers looking at ways to reduce workloads, assessing the workers' demands, helping workers look at how to work with different social work methods, shifting responsibilities onto other staff or onto another organisation, and finally, paying for therapy and trauma debriefing when

needed. Forty-one percent of respondents mentioned that their organisations had Employee Assistance Programs while others had other assistance initiatives in place, such as helping the social workers be more realistic about their caseloads. Once again, certain respondents mentioned that limited funds restricted them and some solutions were having staff go on compulsory leave, encouraging staff to have mentors and drawing up manageable 'get well' programs (*Representative # 6*).

Representative # 5 "We've got an EAP programme... they can choose, they can go privately or they can see somebody at [the organisation] or go to another office. There are and we give them five, I think its five hours. And if they go privately they pay but they get the time off".

4.2.11.4 Staff Coping Mechanisms

Respondents mentioned several coping mechanisms that social workers seemed to adopt in relation to stressful situations. Most of the coping mechanisms that they mentioned were not positive such as that employees would take sick leave, try to shy away from responsibilities, not attend meetings, arrive late for work, go home early, withdraw, not socialise with other staff members and carry on working but at an inferior level.

Representative # 3 'The roll-on coping mechanism, I'm just rolling on with what I'm doing, I just keep going... which I found not that good, I think you should halt and get yourself together... another coping mechanism ..., they sometimes just start to play games...in the sense of consultations they would not really open up to the reasons of not knowing how to do this and how to do that.'

Some of the coping mechanisms used by social workers were more positive and included: asking for sessions with therapists, having vitamin B1 injections, speaking one's mind with colleagues, and working to have balance in their lives. Many respondents mentioned the importance of social workers having balance in their lives. They mentioned that often social workers have hobbies such as sports activities and special interests. Others mentioned the importance of social support.

Representative # 11 '... one good thing I suppose is the camaraderie-ship hey, the friendship...especially if they of the same age level where they will support each other a lot...and that team work helps, in terms of talking and ventilating about the problems they are facing. It gets them through.'

Westbrook et al, (2006) look at personal factors that are related to retention and these include strong self-efficacy beliefs, a strong sense of personal accomplishment, skills necessary to navigate organizational bureaucracy, length of service, and peer support/peer relations. Moos & Schaefer (1986), explain that when people encounter events that disturb their normal patterns of thought, feelings and behaviour, they tend to apply habitual problem solving strategies, which are either positively adaptive or maladaptive.

4.2.11.5 Management coping mechanisms

Only a few of the organisations had systems in place for burnout within management. Three respondents said there was nothing in place to address this problem. Others mentioned some of what was available for management including hiring outside consultants, having regular management meetings, ensuring individual consultations and assisting one another with work. Respondents were asked if they personally were or had ever been burnt out according to their own definition of 'burn out'. A few respondents said that they had been close to burn out at times, but most felt that they had found ways to deal with the situation. One respondent said that she thought she was burnt out at the time of the interview and felt that her deputy director was also showing signs of burning out. The rest of the respondent did not feel that they were burnt out.

Representative # 11 'Luckily I haven't, thank goodness... you could say I have been, but I haven't ever admitted to it as such I suppose in a way, you know, because we went through a very stressful time in 2005 financially...At the end of December 2005 and then all [our] staff left almost... Including the management. And then we had to make changes, to cope and adapt... And then that was very difficult but we kept the organisation functioning... Through all that... As if nothing happened...Well, Uh, I don't know I suppose. But I don't think I'm burnt out to that extent, you know where you can say.'

Ways that respondents managed their own stress were: engaging in outside activities like gym, having supportive families, personal interests, having a faith base, good vacations and seeing people and doing things unrelated to social work.

Representative # 6 'I must say to you, I'm very lucky, I've got some very supportive home circumstances...Like this weekend I just did nothing...My husband's supportive, my children

are supportive, so no... They relieve me, if I want to sleep early, if I don't want to talk I don't talk so ya, I'm one of the lucky people that could keep my marriage alive for 20 years.'

Some respondents also focussed on the importance of managing their life appropriately.

Representative # 3 'I try to focus, somebody once said ... your whole managing game, and the ball game in this whole stress thing is that you should be able to distinguish what is important and what is urgent. So then I start focussing on the important stuff ... And I start working extremely early; I start working at 5:00 in the morning... But once I leave work for that time in the evening that's my family time. I will stand up and I will start working at 12:00 or 13:00 again but that time after work is my time for my family, so ya, I really think that's my time.'

Cherniss (1995) shows that it is important for management to be supported by their superiors and not be expected to carry everything. This will ultimately filter down to workers below them. Other studies have also shown the way that management sets the tone for an organisation (Michaels, et al 2001). It thus makes sense that the directors of organisations and social work managers and supervisors be looked after and find appropriate ways to deal with their own stress and burnout issues.

4.2.12 Reputation of social work (Category 3.7)

4.2.12.1 Perceptions of social work's reputation in South Africa

Opinions on social work's reputation varied. Some respondents believed it depended on the community involved. Others believed that it has a good reputation even 'one of the highest regarded' (*representative # 3*) with people realising the good work done by its professionals. Still others felt that it is not recognised for its value.

Representative # 11 'I know we had a...meeting with the department of social work and there... the fact that social workers are paid less than admin workers in some departments... In most instances because if the government puts the value of social workers up, the public will agree.'

Some respondents believed that the reputation of social work has negative perceptions linked to it.

Representative # 11 'I think in South Africa... they've got no value which is not good...even Oprah Winfrey brought her own social workers to come sort out problems, because they think the Americans do much better work, yet, if you look at what social workers over there do and what social workers here do it's not that different.'

Representative # 5 'Bad... The 'do-gooders'... also, the fact that its underpaid. I think a lot of people see social workers; oh we get paid so badly because you really haven't got the qualifications.'

Some mentioned that social workers in South Africa actually have a valuable role to play and that problems with its reputation could largely be due to the fact that it has not been marketed adequately and that people do not really know what it is about.

4.2.12.2 How perceptions could affect social workers

Certain respondents felt that people tend to have very little respect for the social work profession and that this impacts on clients' compliance when services are rendered, particularly in statutory matters. The lack of respect was especially mentioned in connection with medical professions, like doctors and psychiatrists, and it was mentioned that working in a negative environment makes one feel negative.

Representative # 5 'Why go into social work ... Why would you, I'm being honest, I wouldn't recommend anybody to do social work ... To go to university and do social work if you young, because first of all either you have to go and work for government... They've only got so many jobs first of all and there you'll get a reasonably good salary. And where else do you go, to the NGO sector- you don't get paid.'

Other studies had similar findings on social work as a profession, showing that some of these perceptions regarding a negative reputation are true (Thomlinson et al, 1997). The Jordan Institute for Families (1999) cites improving reputation as a retention strategy as often communities perceive social workers negatively which makes working conditions more difficult.

4.2.13 Job Satisfaction (Category 3.8)

Most respondents could not give an actual or estimated indication of job satisfaction at their organisation, as they had never conducted standardised tests or surveys among their employees to measure this. Only one respondent said that they conducted

climate scales and that this was done on a national basis. Three respondents mentioned that they tried to monitor levels of job satisfaction through supervision and other processes in their organisations. The majority of respondents reported that they did not measure job satisfaction through standardised means as their workers did not stay employed with them for long enough.

Representative # 2 'Yes we do...As part of our performance appraisals and in our supervision... we've got a specific thing where they can say what do I dislike in my job, you know what do I need but just, that type of thing and also in supervision but its not a separate thing.'

4.2.13.1 Factors increasing job satisfaction

Aspects of the job that respondents felt made their social workers satisfied included successful court cases (making social workers feel that they had achieved something), commissioners being happy with their reports, verbal and material acknowledgement and receiving attention.

Representative # 6 'Social workers like a lot of attention. Why, I don't know, but a small phone call or you know just hi, how are you, makes a much bigger difference than a big salary at the end of the day, they must be appreciated, valued.'

Despite acknowledging that money was not the only aspect to take into consideration, most respondents still felt that social workers' dissatisfaction was largely related to money and benefits. Their opinion of some aspects of dissatisfaction were: salaries in comparison to government (and the perception that government social workers sometimes do less work than they do), management not having enough involvement with social workers, management taking decisions without consulting them, not having enough supervisor support, working conditions, bureaucracy, wanting to have a specific project but management saying there was no money for it, lack of necessary resources, too much administration and having to work in areas that they did not like.

Representative # 10 'Equipment. We don't really have the money to...really equip the play therapy sessions as they should be. We try...but it's expensive, I mean, those anatomically correct dolls are about R3000 ... and you have to buy one for each centre. I don't have one for every social worker... and the sand boxes...'

Weir (1979) shows that while financial matters are important for job satisfaction, there are other factors to consider, namely promotional opportunities, considerate and participative supervision, an opportunity to interact with ones' colleagues, varied duties and a high degree of control over work methods and work pace. Freund (2005) shows that low job satisfaction in social work is often linked to people's intent to leave a job. This shows that it is important for organizations to understand satisfaction levels of their employees.

4.2.14 Motivation (Category 3.9)

Most of the respondents seemed to believe that the social workers at their organisations were motivated. They felt that the main signs of motivation were seen in staff not leaving and people working very hard. Respondents listed reasons for a lack of motivation among their social workers as being: unrealistic time frames for work (such as completing service plans), staff vacancies and having to carry other social workers' workload. Some respondents mentioned that motivation was dependent on the time of year and that it varied according to the work that a social worker was doing at the time. One respondent mentioned that motivation depended on the social workers' superiors' levels of motivation.

Representative # 6 'Some areas very motivated. But you know, the area consultant or the supervisor needs to be motivated to motivate the people.'

4.2.14.1 Intrinsic motivators

Only some respondents felt that social workers were able to advance in their organisations. All believed however that their workers were afforded a good deal of responsibility. In general, respondents seemed to feel that management of their organisations worked to remind employees of how important they were to the organisation. Some did mention that this could be done to a greater extent.

Representative # 2 'What I also appreciate with my management committee is that the staff has to report back to management here and then afterwards... the management or the chairperson will congratulate them on their work. It's very important that it comes from that level and not only their offices or me or other senior staff.'

When looking at intrinsic motivators that their social workers might feel, most respondents believed that their workers experienced a sense of achievement. Areas that this manifested in were their performing well in projects, completing reports, giving good feedback and speaking of projects with pride.

Most respondents felt that their workers were adequately recognised. One national organisation mentioned that this would depend on the office involved as well as the specific management of an organisation. It was mentioned that sometimes clients and management both recognised work done by social workers.

Most respondents felt that their social workers had a feeling of affiliation to their organisations and that this was a motivator for them to stay. When looking at what organisations did as special treats for their workers, one organisation sent their workers for a massage every month 'to help them stay in touch with who they are' (*Respondent # 10*). Most respondents mentioned that they arranged special functions or events but many mentioned that cost was a concern. Some examples of functions which organisations generally budgeted for were Christmas parties, team building, braais on site and annual end of year lunches.

Representative # 5 'End of the year party. We always have something very nice... we go to Spier, to Moya, we go to Radissons'.

Interviewer: And do you pay for it as an organisation?

Representative # 5 'No, no, no, no. Staff, we contribute every month but we pay the transport and we pay for one drink, um, but the staff all contribute to it.'

Some respondents showed that they worked out how to integrate fun with work.

Representative # 5 'Next week...we've got clean up day and we all bring lunch and we do no work. We just... then you can win a prize, who's got the cleanest office, or the tidiest office...because it's chaos. We never get a chance to do it. I mean if anybody opened my filing cabinet I think they'd all run away. And we cannot function this way.'

Representative # 2 'I believe that there must be opportunity for people to relax and do something, that's why we've got a braai area next to the swimming pool here and we decide on a Friday we going to have a braai and we braai and we have a beer...you spend more time here with your colleagues than you spend with your wife and children back home.'

When looking at other areas that could serve to intrinsically motivate the social workers, a few respondents mentioned that workers could relocate within the organisation. This was problematic however, as most provincial and national offices of organisations had different offices with different structures and there did not seem to be a uniform management system. Some organisations offered additional leave as an incentive for being in the job for a long time or if social workers were particularly stressed. This incentive was not used as a reward strategy.

Overall, it seemed that respondents were not sure of all the ways they could use to motivate their social workers. Gibson (1980) emphasises the importance of a leader understanding the meaning of motivation, its practical uses, factors that motivate people, and what a leader can do to increase the motivation of subordinates. He goes on to say that, managers need to know the objects, things, or feelings which people value as rewards for their work effort, and what they strive for in their work.

Several studies have found that staff remain in their jobs due to intrinsic rewards such as appreciation for the value of their work (Freund, 2005). Ahlrichs (2000) talks about the importance of workers enjoying their work and even having a certain amount of fun. Most respondents mentioned that there was plenty of scope for them to make the work atmosphere more pleasant and increase intrinsic motivation. Kaye and Jordan-Evans (1999) show that workers can have a feeling that an organisation sees them as important if it displays care and concern for its employees. Another way to show care and concern for employees is to organise 'special treats' for them (Kaye & Jordan-Evans, 1999).

4.2.15 Remuneration (Category 3.10)

4.2.15.1 Perception of what social workers should earn

On average, respondents thought social workers should earn R10 000 on an entry level. The lowest amount was R8500 and the highest was R12 000. Three respondents commented that they thought all social workers should earn the same amount or more than what government pays their social workers as a starting salary. Seventy five percent of respondents seemed to think that their social workers received a

competitive remuneration package in comparison with other NGO's. Most stated that their social workers did not leave them to work for other NGO's, but that when they left they only moved to government organisations or to work overseas. Some respondents mentioned that they were competitive in terms of factors other than salary amount, such as offering good benefits.

Representative # 3 'I think if you look at the whole package it's more competitive. It's not where I would like it to be... we are evaluating international funding options at another level now. But it's competitive in regard to the fact that there is a percentage amount which is a group pension fund so if you look long term, what you are getting its quite nice, it's much better. But if you are looking at the availability of cash on the table it's not that competitive.'

Armstrong (2002) shows that the salary people earn can be an indication of their perceived value to an organisation. Both Kela, (2006), and Brink (2007) show that the low salaries that social workers receive impacts employee retention in the field of social work.

4.2.15.2 Fundraising for salaries

Most respondents felt that it was not possible for them to increase their social worker salaries, as their organisations did not have funds to do so. When looking at what the organisations did to raise funds, five respondents specifically mentioned that they had fundraisers. One said that she had three fundraisers who all did different things.

Representative # 10 'I've got a fundraiser who just looks at trusts and foundations and bequests.... Then I've got one whose looking... internationally... then I've got one who does like golf days and...small grants and that kind of thing...I believe it's essential... they are outsourced .. And there are conditions as to how much they must bring in for me to pay them a certain amount and all of that. But we don't work a percentage, they are on retainment.'

Organisations also received funds through donors, coaching, remunerations and bequests, money from trust funds, the community, international funding, corporate funding, partner-shipping with banks and business partners, church organisations, competitions, projects, limited service fees and Community Chest. Most mentioned that they received money from the lottery but some mentioned that they had to be careful not to be too dependant on it, as it was infrequently available and salaries could not be budgeted from it.

Armstrong (2002) shows that there are different aspects to take into consideration when establishing employee salaries. One of these is supply and demand and given that social workers are in low supply and high demand, it is evident that organisations need to be creative when finding ways to raise funds for social worker salaries.

4.2.15.3 Subsidisation from government

Whether or not government is subsidising enough of the salary percentage was a contentious issue among respondents as some felt government should pay more as they are using public money. Others felt that this was not government's responsibility. Comments varied from respondents feeling that government should subsidise 100% to feeling that government was doing them a favour to fund them at all.

Representative # 10 'I mean why are they subsidising, we doing the same work that they doing, why aren't they giving us what they give ... Their government workers that side.'

Many mentioned that government only subsidised 80% of an entry-level salary and that they thus struggled to retain social workers with experience.

Representative # 7 'At the moment the intake salary of the social worker is about 75% of what government is paid so it is still possible for an organisation to do some fundraising to carry that difference. But the big problem comes in when people are in more senior positions or have longer work experience. Because they don't acknowledge that. So people who start with ten years experience we only still receiving the entry level of that post and so the difference becomes...[greater].'

Some mentioned that they preferred the concept of program funding rather than funding for posts.

Representative # 1 'I would like to see them move to program funding. Where they pay you for the whole program then we can decide when we can employ other categories of staff. One thing is we only get subsidies for a social worker, for a development worker. We don't get subsidies for a psychologist or a teacher or an occupational therapist. It would be very nice if we could get an integrated approach going into our organisation.'

4.2.15.4 Comparison with government

All of the respondents felt that it was not fair that the entry-level salary for government social workers was different to that of NGO's.

Representative # 3 'The discrepancy is appalling. To put it bluntly.'

Representative # 7 'I think the whole way that social service is structured in our country, about two thirds of social services is in hands of NGO's and I think that makes it very unfair if government can actually give higher salaries but they don't really pass enough subsidies over to the NGO sector. Because I think, at the end of the day looking at our constitution basically it's, social welfare is basically just as education is, its a government responsibility... So we are actually supporting the government but it's difficult to do if you don't get the assistance of financial support as well.'

One mentioned that she thought NGO's should pay better than government rather than be limited by their salary scale. Another respondent mentioned that the difference between remuneration for government and NGO's is not only seen in the salary amount, but also in the benefits offered.

Representative # 2 'They've got a bigger medical aid they've got a better one, more members and more government and another thing is apart from the medical aid, add to that the housing subsidy that's making a huge difference and then, what nobody thinks about is having a higher salary, there's a bigger percentage of that salary goes into the pension fund... So if you take the social worker in the NGO sector starts working today and one is in your government department and they both get to the same date of retirement, the one in the government department will have almost three times more in that time as the one in the NGO sector'.

According to Cape Gateway (2008), the actual amount that government social workers are earning is R8500 on an intake level. The amount that the social workers at the NGOs earn can be as low as R3500 (Briede & Loffell, 2007). This is a R5000 difference. The debate is whether or not it is government's responsibility to pay a higher subsidy so that NGO's can pay their social workers more. Some literature seems to think so as Brink (2007) suggests that organisations working with statutory work should have a full 100% subsidy.

4.2.15.5 Benefits offered

Most organisations offered their workers the following benefits: pension, maternity leave, medical aid and UIF. The amount covered by the organisations for each benefit varied. One respondent explained that within the package people could choose what they wanted in terms of benefits (*Representative # 1*).

Medical Aid

The general amount paid toward medical aid by employers was 50% of the medical aid chosen and only covered the main member. One respondent indicated that all employees that earned more than R3500 were compelled to have medical aid. Another had a medical aid scheme where if members did not take the medical aid option they would still receive the benefit monetarily.

Pension

Social workers' pensions varied greatly between organisations. Most respondents indicated that only permanent workers could access this benefit. On average the amount put into the social workers' pension fund was 10% paid by the employer and 7.5% paid by the employee.

Maternity Leave

In line with labour law, all of the organisations had to offer 4 months maternity leave for their social workers. In this time, they would keep the social workers post open until their return and continue to pay benefits to the worker according to the Basic Conditions of Employment Act. Very few organisations paid their staff while they were on maternity leave, even partially. Of those that did pay, one mentioned that it was 50% of the normal pay for up to 6 months and another that it depended on the social workers years of experience but that it was generally two thirds of the salary for three months.

Paid membership of the professional councils

Only three respondents mentioned that they offered paid membership of the professional council for social work. One mentioned that it depended on the branch.

Representative # 2 'Small things like that makes a huge difference.'

Overtime

None of the organisations offered paid overtime but tended to pay back time with time or what they referred to as 'flexitime'. One mentioned that their organisation paid time and a half for overtime.

Tuition reimbursement

One organisation offered tuition reimbursement, dependent on funds and one had a bursary scheme.

Danger Pay

None of the organisations offered danger pay however one did mention that they paid for small things when employees were expected to travel to make up for the inconvenience.

Representative # 2 'What we've got for our staff, we travel a lot, we have to work in the whole province is ...I've forgot the name of it, it's not incidental...Because you not at home ...And to buy a newspaper when you on the road, a cold drink, whatever.'

Fair pay and benefits are some of the reasons cited by Kaye et al (1999) when looking at common reasons why employees stay at organisations. The Jordan Institute for families (1999) shows that improved compensation can be used to lure new employees and reward experienced people who stay.

4.2.16 Rewards and Performance appraisals (Category 3.11)

4.2.16.1 Assessment of performance

The majority of organisations had ways of assessing performance but only some offered rewards or incentives for good performance. All respondents believed that they were aware of which of their employees were performing at superior levels. Some of the strategies that they used to establish superior performers were the use of progress reports; having quarterly evaluations; reviewing files; meeting regularly with staff; conducting skills audits and reviewing post descriptions and performance area outcomes.

Representative # 3 'According to the skills audit that we are busy doing, that's part of it. We really work strengths based and what we do with these people is we get them and put them into focal groups. So when we have say a middle management meeting and we have specific programs we are going to implement, or we have training we ask them to become part of that discussion groups to have them at a senior level more involved and to use their specific skills ...That's a way of acknowledging them.'

All of the representatives reported that they had ways in which they assessed social worker performance. The general model was that both social worker and supervisor would individually fill in an assessment/appraisal form and then sit together and discuss it. They would then try to reach a consensus, sign it and send it to top management. Some organisations had committee meetings at this level to discuss the final scoring. Most organisations conducted formal appraisals once a year and only one reported having them six monthly.

Two organisations did not have specific performance appraisal systems at the time of the research. It was explained that they monitored their social workers progress according to their job descriptions and their individual development plans. Some of the organisations seemed to have very up to date performance review systems (such as one that had been borrowed from a corporate company) while some respondents felt that their systems were not satisfactory.

4.2.16.2 Rewards for performance

Acknowledgement for employees who worked particularly hard generally took the form of salary increases according to tenure. For some organisations, the reward was whether or not a social workers contract would be renewed. None of the organisations offered their staff team rewards. Some gave performance bonuses, some gave acknowledgement through supervision and one mentioned that they were looking into an incentive program, one conducted a reward ceremony and another organisation explained that they gave the workers a reward tea.

A few of the organisations said that they offered performance related rewards to their social workers. Examples were in the form of performance bonuses, performance-related salary increases and 'performance assessment merits of anything between 0 and 15 %' (*Respondent # 1*). Those that did not offer rewards generally mentioned funding to be a problem. Despite funding problems, one organisation offered what it could.

Representative # 3 'Because the finances are a problem but what we've done is not per branch but at the last congress we had, everyone could apply, and we were if social workers had made a very big input. Either by a program or model or theory or practice or anything like that and

then we gave them like a R5000 per social worker who actually um...It was like a prize and they would investigate with the management transformation and development to develop that program in the [organisation].’

Ahlrichs (2000) discusses how it can be very discouraging for good workers when they see nothing being done about exceptional or inadequate service of other workers. One aspect that he mentions is that salaries should be raised according to performance. Despite this theory, the majority of organisations raised salaries according to tenure. Some respondents mentioned that social workers received an annual increase plus a performance increase depending on the availability of money.

All of the respondents reported that they would take measures to deal with inefficient workers. They also all believed that they were aware of the employees in their organisations who did not perform adequately. All had disciplinary procedures although most preferred to take a developmental route when correcting a worker. Some respondents mentioned that a lack of training or personal problems could result in the workers not performing adequately.

Representative # 9 ‘It’s normally temporary things and it’s normally related to a matter of stress or being unwell, and we’ve had a number of cases over the years of staff being in that situation, so there’s a remedial which I work with, with the person concerned.’

Interviewer: ‘So it’s not punitive?’

Representative # 9 ‘Definitely not, no, it’s very supportive.’

Representative # 10 ‘We set the interim goals for the next 6 months and it needs to be spelt what your objectives are and what we want by that time.’

Interviewer: And if they still don’t perform?’

Representative # 10 ‘Then we dismiss the social worker. That I feel we have to do if she doesn’t perform and you know we put all that, there is a disciplinary process and I have had the unfortunate experience with one because you are impacting on other people’s lives and she was not doing her job.’

4.2.17 Staff Development (Category 3.12)

4.2.17.1 Orientation programs/period

Seventy five percent of the organisations surveyed ran comprehensive orientation programs for new staff. Organisations varied on what was entailed in the orientations.

Time periods for inductions varied from one week to two weeks and four weeks. Some organisations viewed the whole of the social workers first six months at their organisation as an orientation period.

The nature of the orientation offered by some organisations was dependant on how many years experience a worker had, what their developmental needs were and how long the post had been vacant.

Representative # 3 'In a normal situation they do have that... when there is no posts vacant or whatever the case may be we try to, but nothing is always that clear cut and I know in practise sometimes things fall through but the way in which it's supposed to work is that they should have a specific orientation period.'

One typical aspect of social work is that workers have reported feeling completely overwhelmed when they enter a job, even on the first day. Kaye and Jordan-Evans (1999), show that this can set the tone for whether or not a worker will feel that they are coping in a job. Most of the respondents mentioned that they worked to ease their social workers into their jobs. Some thought that they were granted sufficient time and training while, others mentioned that it was possible for social workers to feel completely overwhelmed when they first started work at their organisation.

Representative # 9 'They can be completely overwhelmed. Because they get thrown, often into a case load that hasn't had any input for a few weeks or a month or so, so there's a lot of crises that need to be dealt with.'

One respondent explained that it was normal for a social worker to feel overwhelmed when they first began working for an organisation but explained that they would work to assist the worker and not expect too much of them initially. Quite a few respondents mentioned that it would depend on the years of experience and background that the worker had and that some would need more support and 'containment'. Another mentioned that it could depend on a person's personality

Representative # 3 'It would all depend on their personality as well. I think what stresses them as well is that they should actually start with organising themselves. I've found that a big thing that social workers don't really even have is experience in managing work load, to really plan and evaluate what's going on. So they jumping in and not sitting back and planning a lot so

they can know what's happening and then they don't know what's in their files and then that stresses them.'

Michaels et al (2001) explain that it is important to orientate people to an organisation when they first begin working and that the way orientation is managed can affect whether or not the social worker is retained.

4.2.17.2 Development and Career growth

Some respondents believed that their organisations catered for career growth of their social workers and others did not, largely because they were too small. Most respondents mentioned that there was little opportunity for upward mobility. Respondents also reported that promotions were seldom possible due to flat structures within their organisations. Two respondents mentioned that if a post is available they give first preference to their own workers.

One respondent that believed there was opportunity for promotion and upward mobility showed that she was a good example.

Representative # 10 'I'm a prime example. I came here as a social worker 11 years ago ... I became coordinator, then became manager, then the outreach director, then deputy director.'

One respondent mentioned that staff did sometimes leave due to lack of career development possibilities. This respondent felt that it was not always a good idea to promote excellent workers to management positions and that it would be better if they could be promoted into other areas of their jobs (*Representative #7*). Another mentioned that it would be a good idea to create other categories for the more experienced staff (*Representative # 1*).

When looking at opportunities for social workers to relocate, most respondents mentioned that workers could request to be transferred if they had more than one site office. One mentioned that workers had to be in a given position for 2 years before they could be transferred. Some branches functioned as separate organisations and and so special arrangements and negotiations had to be undertaken if a social worker wanted to relocate. Some offices had more branches and thus more teams into which to move. One respondent mentioned that she had lost workers to other offices before.

Representative # 8 'That's up to them. Because every branch advertises their posts you know internally. I've lost people to my national office which is in Cape Town...Sore point. You train them then they get a job in national office.'

Brink (2007) shows that career growth tends to be limited in the field of social work. It is evident from the above findings that career growth tends to depend on the organisation involved and it would be well worth their time and effort for those that do not make room for career growth to work on this aspect. Kaye et al (1999) explain that keeping employees on a continual path of growing and developing by adding new skills helps organisations gain a competitive edge in employee retention.

4.2.17.3 Training

All organisations conducted 'on the job training'. Supervisors, managers and area consultants generally did this training. One national organisation mentioned that area consultants from other areas might come in and help if they had particular knowledge and experience. Forms of on the job training included setting up various talks and workshops, getting outside consultants to do training or having social workers to train one another.

Representative # 7 'I think we have a lot of peer training as well, I think that is quite accepted that we often have our most senior or experienced staff who will say for instance' you can't do consultations. They will perhaps do some consultations so we utilise our own staff as freely as possible.'

Most organisations mentioned that they had various training courses that they sent their staff on and seemed to be very interested in this aspect of development. Some social workers were said to go on training as often as once a month. One respondent mentioned that she sometimes thought they went on more training than they were able to assimilate. It seems that training generally depended on worker needs, availability and the organisation's funding. One respondent also mentioned that they had in-service training once a month and attended workshops when invited. One respondent mentioned that they expected training to benefit the whole organisation.

Representative # 5 'But then we expect them to bring back to the organisation. And the people have to come and do a presentation to the rest of the team. That's an expectation. Plus they have to write it up and it goes into the library.'

Interviewer: 'Do they actually do that?'

Representative # 5 'They have to... So that everybody's got access, um, to the information.'

One respondent mentioned that they had to keep the cost of training in mind and another mentioned that they especially looked out for free training. One reported that her social workers were required to do a literature review on a monthly basis. Some viewed training as very important and worked to do it well.

Representative # 8 'They have just been away for four days, the whole bang lot of them. We have ...it was hectic and we started this in order for them to be accredited which is great...but this means that they have got to implement the projects and then to monitor for six months ...So, you know, it was commitment on their side, it was expensive on my side... But the organisation will benefit because they know more.'

4.2.17.4 Decision-making freedom

When looking at social workers having the freedom to make decisions and try new things, respondents mentioned that freedom in decision-making was important to them.

Representative # 2 'They must be allowed to take decisions and they must be allowed to make mistakes.'

Some mentioned that this was conditional on social workers not causing harm or risk to the organisation.

Representative # 4 'Obviously if there is going to be a risk for the client or the organisation or the person for example, we would not allow the person to make a certain choice or decision. But if it is a learning experience we probably think there is a better way of doing it but it's okay, go and try it your way and come back with the result. They are allowed to do that. But nobody will allow anybody to make decisions that is going to be of risk to the organisation.'

It was evident that certain organisations kept more control over their workers than others did. One mentioned that they had had some negative experiences in that regard due to social workers having too much freedom.

Representative # 9 'Every case management decision is discussed with me...I'm not autocratic in terms of telling people how they must manage their cases so they can use their own initiative, their own creativity and just as long as they communicate that to me so that it is authorised...Because ultimately I'm responsible.'

Representative # 11 'Because of the fact that we haven't had too close supervision... Social workers have made mistakes... In terms of decisions, especially around major issues such as, removing children ... that type of thing.'

Inadequate training is cited by Westbrook et al (2006:38) as being a reason for turnover while Weir (1976) shows that a high degree of control over work methods and work pace can be a reason for employees staying at an organisation. It is thus evident that organisations need to train their workers as much as possible which will also allow workers to take more control over their own work.

4.2.18 Supervision (Category 3.13)

4.2.18.1 Supervision times

Most organisations did not have set supervision times or requirements. Because of distances, a number of staff were supervised telephonically and via e-mail. Some had to drive great distances to get to their supervisors and thus did not see them often. These workers were generally allocated a day where they spent as much time as they needed with their supervisor.

Representative # 4 'I'm here to see you today, that's my day, so I can spend three hours with you if that is what I want, or five hours with you or no, otherwise it will be two hours, but it depends.'

Most organisations did not ensure set times or make set appointments for supervision of their social workers. Supervision was not seen by all organisations as a requirement and if other things came up the supervision could be cancelled, even if a social worker was depending on it.

Representative # 3 'It also does not happen when there's a crisis on the ground. With the vacancies we really find that we are struggling at this stage. What's happening now is that the middle managers are supposed to start doing the social work services because the social workers within themselves can't arrange, they can't keep their hands on everything.'

The nature of supervision offered to social workers was largely dependant on their individual level of experience. Most respondents mentioned that their older social workers had less supervision and that some were on a consultancy basis. Overall, social workers were supervised once a month for a period of between an hour and two hours.

The organisations varied a great deal on their policies surrounding supervision of social workers. One respondent explained that their policy stated that social workers who were still in their probation time or who had less than two years experience had to be supervised at least twice a month. Two organisations said that they supervised their entry-level social workers once a week. One supervised all social workers weekly and also mentioned that she had an open-door policy. A certain respondent felt that if supervision did not happen regularly it was evident that the supervisor involved was not performing adequately and needed to be dealt with.

One respondent explained that workers had formal supervision a minimum of twice a month but that workers also had other sessions and programs for development and looking at knowledge and skills. Another mentioned that workers had an administrative supervisor and group supervision at the office but that the organisation paid for an external supervisor for all their workers as well.

Representative # 10 'I hire outside specialists, I train outside specialists...to supervise, ... because I feel the secondary trauma is what worries me...I've been amazed at what people deal with, but I also think it's something that then we have group supervision also, where people talk and support each other. Because we work with quite a lot.'

When asked if their social workers ever came into contact with anyone more senior than their direct supervisor for supervision many respondents answered that they did not. One mentioned that they had a policy where workers on consultation level could use supervisors from other branches if they liked. Some mentioned that if a supervisor was not available they as directors also had an open door policy. One mentioned that she saw social workers herself every three months.

Representative # 8 'Every three months I see them, it's also built in mechanism. I need to check on the manager because all their files, their supervision files come through to me so I

can see continuity and what the content is of each session is. Everything is, the agenda's, all of that. Um, I don't have the time to do it so we've built it in every three months I have a conference session with the manager and the social worker.'

4.2.18.2 Types of supervision

When looking at the different types of supervision, (Kadushin, 1992) differentiates between administrative, supportive and educative supervision. Most of the respondents mentioned that administrative, supportive and educative supervision were given an equal percentage of time at their organisations. Some said it was dependant on and adjusted according to the needs of specific social workers. Time spent on each also varied according to the specific supervisor involved and their strong points.

One respondent mentioned that having an external supervisor for the social workers ensured that they were adequately supported. The external supervisors' main role was to provide support while the internal supervisor looked at administration. This respondent added that she was very passionate about supportive supervision.

Representative # 10 'I would love every social worker in South Africa to be supervised outside, I just wonder what happens to the psyche of a lot of the social workers who are not supervised. Um, I know the difference because I've been there. Been supervised on the inside by a person who didn't know a lot...because it doesn't mean because you're a good social worker you're necessarily a good supervisor or manager.'

Watson (1973) explains the various forms of supervision available as being the tutorial model, case consultation, the supervisory group, peer group discussion, tandem supervision and the team. Organisations mainly seemed to use tutorial and group supervision for case consultation. A small number made use of multi-disciplinary teams. Other types of supervision mentioned were telephonic supervision, e-mail supervision, multi-program supervision, peer group discussion, workshops and supervision groups for supervisors, provincial supervision and team meetings. One respondent mentioned that branches sometimes got together for large group meetings where they could share cases with one another and learn in that way.

4.2.18.3 Training of supervisors

Not all respondents said that their supervisors were trained to supervise but most felt that having experience made up for this. One respondent mentioned that the supervisors who did not have experience tended to struggle with supervision. Results showed that supervisors did not generally play a large role in the social worker's personal career development but a few did think that supervisors would help point workers into another direction of social work if they were not thriving in the one they were in.

Representative # 6 'We also sign a contract at each [office], where it's spelt out their direct role, the supervisor's direct role, the social worker's role and in between that you sometimes have to be very honest and say this is not where you need to be, you need to be with correctional services, or whatever.'

One respondent said that their external supervisor worked to encourage social workers to further themselves.

Representative # 10 'She encourages the social workers like to do honours, because a lot of our social workers are doing their masters in play-therapy, okay, so she would encourage that so that there's new learning all the time.'

There is a large amount of literature available on supervision and many studies have shown that aspects related to supervision can be major causal factors in turnover Smith (2005). Munson (1983) comments that supervisors should have professional training in the areas in which supervision is provided and Thomlinson et al (1996) add that they should have an up-to date knowledge base. It would thus seem necessary for all organisations to ensure that their supervisors are trained to supervise.

4.2.19 Management (Category 3.14)

4.2.19.1 Transparency and information sharing

Organisations varied in terms of the information they would choose to share with employees, their methods of communication and what they were prepared to discuss.

Most believed that they were transparent. Most respondents said that they were open about funding.

Representative # 5 'We're very open about money, about what we've got...I will say, in the reserves, we have only got a hundred thousand rand...And I can show you. if you don't believe me, so we're open about it.'

Respondents mentioned that they had Annual General Meetings, annual reports and auditors for their financial statements. One respondent indicated that they advertised their AGM in the newspaper and that their books were always open to the public. Other ways that organisations worked to increase transparency were to have donor financial reports that went out on a quarterly basis, to have transparency as part of their staff code, and to have a management committee made up of lay people who were members of the community that they served.

Representative # 4 'We have boards and social workers together at one meeting and they all receive the same information, and there's written communication and policies, that's available to everyone so they know what's going on. We make a point of saying that you know financial information should be open to everybody and there should be monthly statements so that we know the whole time where we at.'

Two respondents felt that it was better if people had access to information on a need to know basis.

Representative # 4 'I don't think we keep secrets but we, you give people the information that is relevant to them. So really if, what happens with head office is not of concern of, in the circle of concern or influence of the social worker in [another area] why should we share it with her? So our staff gets relevant information.'

One respondent gave an example of how their transparency hurt the organisation as when staff learnt that the organisation might not survive financially, most of them left.

The U.S. Department of State (2005) explains that transparency serves to achieve accountability, which means that those in authority can be held responsible for their actions. Without transparency and accountability, trust will be lacking

4.2.19.2 Communication

Communication is recognised as being a crucial factor in management of organisations (Kreitner, 1986). Organisations varied in how they communicated with employees. Ways that they communicated were through personal contact, team meetings, board meetings, on site visits, checklists, memos, staff meetings and supervision. One respondent spoke about how communication is not always effective due to time limitations. Some felt that it helped to have memos as then everyone was aware of developments, particularly if there were policy decisions that needed to be communicated.

Representative # 6 'We've got also the system that we call it the communication file so each office has a big file with the content of our constitution, all our policies all the memos, so whenever lets say new staff come along, that is in what we call a communications file so anything like that.'

One respondent mentioned that as director they bridged the gap between staff and management

Representative # 2 'I'm sitting here with the staff I'm staff but in management meetings I'm management and I think that's the link between management and staff. It puts a huge responsibility on me to know which hat I am putting on at a specific time...But that creates a very good link between management and staff and I think that's important...the CEO is the link.'

4.2.19.3 Staff grievances and public complaints

All respondents mentioned that their organisations had processes and procedures in place to handle staff grievances but the actual procedures varied. One had a book that was kept in the office in which staff members could write complaints. Some felt that it was important to communicate with employees and get to know them personally. Only two mentioned that some of their staff members were linked to a trade union but all organisations mentioned that their workers were allowed to be linked to trade unions if they so desired.

Comments regarding public complaints were that they were dealt with as a matter of urgency and that the 'client is number one'. One organisation mentioned that they had

a marketing promotions manager who covered that aspect and that they had a complaints section on their website (*Representative # 2*). Some of the directors handled public complaints themselves. Others first let the ground supervisors handle them.

Representative # 6 'We've also got a policy on that. It also depends on what it is, you know, the society handles, or the social worker and the supervisor, if the supervisor can't then it comes to my level, if it doesn't then it goes to national.'

4.2.19.4 Flexibility

All of the respondents believed that their organisations strived to cut down on unnecessary red tape however very few explained how they chose to do this. One respondent mentioned that they tried to have as few meetings as possible. Another respondent mentioned that he tried to keep his particular office 'paperless'. Others tried to have as few permission lines as possible.

Some mentioned that red tape was necessary when it came to finances and others admitted that even though they tried, they still found that there was a certain amount of red tape that they could not get rid of.

Representative # 3 '...[managerial control is] crucial so there is a lot of registers and things we have brought in to have financial control like with equipment, donations received and so on. Its not as if there's nothing, but hopefully there are other things.'

Most respondents expected their social workers to either clock in or sign a register. It is apparent that this can be seen in two ways; either as a good management principle or an attempt to micro manage. One mentioned that it makes sense for legal purposes to have a register.

Representative # 5 'We find, you discover very quickly who you can't trust... You don't have to be a policeman, it comes your way.'

Representative # 2 'Purely from a labour point of view because you cannot have disciplinary procedures against a person for coming late to work or going early unless you've got a record.'

Organisations varied in whether or not their social workers were able to work flexible hours and manage their own time. This largely depended on the nature of the work at the organisation. Some were very accommodating in terms of whether their social workers were allowed to go straight to a meeting from home or not. Some respondents said that their workers could work flexible hours within reason and as long as their supervisor was aware of it and approved it.

Representative # 3 'It would all depend on what the situation would be. I mean if you work late and you come in late it isn't the problem. The coming late is a problem if you are supposed to be there and you're not there... Flexible to an extent, yes, but organised flexibility...Not I feel like today doing this or that. But if the arrangement has been made in that regard.'

Others were stricter about workers being in their offices at specific times.

Representative # 2 'You get paid to work your office hours... You see we all here at 7:15, we here early because of the traffic but we can't leave at three, people look for you after three, the branches work till half past four so we just to miss the traffic, it's not...we also work really hard.'

Some felt that it was fine as long as the person was working.

Representative # 11 'Do reports at home and come in 10:00, that has been done... You see, we have a like for instance, if say for example somebody who has got uh children at home... That's got sick or whatever, then they take work home and they will still do their work... And we usually don't have too much of an issue with that...

Representative # 10 'I also encourage, say you want to go somewhere, you don't take lunch time today, you take the hour tomorrow... You know, and for me its not about punishment, its about meeting people where they are at'.

Most believed that they could trust their workers and that their organisations had an atmosphere of trust. Most believed that they did not really have rigid and unnecessary work place rules.

Representative # 4 'We will trust everybody until you give us reasons not to trust you and then all hell breaks lose.'

Some respondents felt that there was not an atmosphere of trust in their organisations. One mentioned that it depended on the relationship between the person and the supervisors and that due to past abuse; management was looking into putting systems in place to prevent situations from arising (*Respondent # 11*). Another mentioned that trust levels depended on the experience of the worker

Representative # 8 'The younger ones, I think they need to understand the picture...that is where because they would try and think its fine because they don't know, the consequence.

Kaye et al (1999:39) show that managements' attitude towards employees and employees feeling trusted, honoured and respected can go a long way toward retaining of staff.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter presented research findings according to three major themes and their related categories. Sub categories were discussed and contextualised within the framework of relevant literature and research already done in the field. The final chapter of this dissertation will outline the conclusions and recommendations gained from this research.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide a brief outline of the main conclusions that can be drawn from the findings of this research. It will also list some of the respondent and researcher's recommendations. This dissertation will end with some concluding comments.

5.2 Conclusions

The conclusions that follow will be discussed in relation to the three objectives of the research study and the main themes and categories that emerged from the data.

Objective 1: The perceptions of NGO management regarding social work as a scarce skill.

5.2.1 Number of social workers in South Africa

The research respondents perceived that there are not enough social workers in South Africa and that their organisations did not have enough social workers to work in their specific geographical areas. They thus realised that they needed to place more emphasis on networking. A large number of them felt that government needed to sponsor more posts for their organisations.

5.2.2 Scarce skill declaration

Findings indicated that all respondents seemed to think that it was positive that the scarcity of social work as a skill had finally been acknowledged by government officials (Kela, 2006). This was seen as an indication of the value that social work contributes to society. All respondents were aware of government's Draft Recruitment and Retention Strategy for social workers (2006), however not all were aware of its contents. Overall respondents felt that the policy would affect their organisations in a negative manner. They believed that it only made provision for government

organisations and that it would actually add to their dilemma of social work as a scarce skill. All respondents believed South Africa needs specific policies on social worker retention and many emphasised that there needs to be a partnership between NGO and government strategies.

Objective 2: The perceptions of NGO management concerning turn over of their social workers.

5.2.3 Turnover Rates

Findings show that the trend of high turnover rates in South Africa (Brink, 2007) is also evident in the Cape Town Metropolitan area. Many respondents mentioned that social workers did not stay at their organisations for longer than three years. Those who did stay were generally older, more experienced workers. It was also evident that turnover appeared to be cyclical in nature as organisations went through different periods where turnover amounts varied.

5.2.4 Why social workers are leaving

Respondents tended to attribute high social worker turnover rates to low salaries in the NGO sector. Other reasons listed were poor working conditions, change in life circumstances, family responsibilities, going overseas, better prospects elsewhere, going to work for government, high case loads, many job openings for social workers in urban areas, lack of recognition, difficult areas of organisational operation, not feeling safe, and lack of opportunities for growth and development. It was evident that very few organisations conducted confidential exit interviews and as a result, reasons respondents gave for social workers leaving were generally based on assumptions.

5.2.5 Turnover Implications

Findings highlighted that turnover has many negative consequences and implications for organisations. All of the respondents recognised that turnover has many associated costs and that ways need to be found to reduce it. Some of the costs that they noted were programs standing still, having to pay to train individuals, advertising costs, client dissatisfaction, lost time and lowered staff morale. Respondents also mentioned that their client system suffered due to social worker inability to deliver necessary

services. Most mentioned that they struggled to replace workers when they left and that they often had posts vacant for long periods of time. When posts were vacant, they often had other social workers take on the workload of the vacant posts. A small number said that they hired locum workers and put programs on hold when there were vacancies. Organisations at times found themselves hiring people that were not necessarily suited for jobs and very few were able to match specific people to specific jobs due to social work being a scarce skill. Overall, respondents felt that social workers who left their organisations would be good promoters and advertisements for them and that they left happy.

Objective 3: Strategies NGO's employ in order to retain their social work staff.

5.2.6 Whether organisations had specific policies for social worker retention

Most of the organisations did not have specific policies regarding social worker retention. All but one respondent said that they saw the need to have a policy and that there were plans to introduce one in the future. Their reasons for not having a policy at the time of the study were mainly financial.

5.2.7 Content and nature of social work

Most of the respondents felt that employees need to enjoy the work that they do but there was a lack of consensus regarding whether or not their social workers actually enjoyed the content and nature of their work. Answers from statutory organisations tended to be more negative than those of specialised organisations. Respondents seemed to feel that statutory work was particularly emotionally draining. Aspects that respondents perceived social workers to not enjoy included: administration aspects such as keeping statistics, managerial responsibilities such as budgeting and proposal writing, training, working with sexual abuse and trauma, not getting feedback from government regarding plans, not being able to choose ones' client base and large amounts of statutory intervention, particularly that involving lawyers.

5.2.8 Security

Respondents acknowledged the importance of physical, job and legal security in the work place. Most did what they could to ensure that their workers felt safe in terms of these aspects. Some respondents felt that their workers did not feel safe in terms of physical security and this was largely linked to having to work in certain areas and contexts such as conducting home visits. All organisations had certain mechanisms in place to combat the occurrence of negative incidences. Most respondents acknowledged that they could not offer their workers complete job security due to operating on public funds. Most respondents felt that their workers were secure in terms of legal liability and had measures in place to do with this. It seems however that organisations could do more in this respect when looking at authors such as Michaels et al (2001), Ahlrichs (2000) and the Jordan Institute for families (2000) who show that workers' perceived safety can affect turnover rates.

5.2.9 Resources

It is apparent from the findings that many of the organisations did not have all of the necessary resources for their social workers to accomplish their jobs adequately. Some of these were basic resources such as telephones and computers. It was also evident that the majority of respondents realised their organisations needed to be updated in terms of technological aspects.

5.2.10 Stress and Burnout

Respondents all agreed that stress and burnout cause a problem in the social work profession but only two reported that they assessed their workers for burnout on an ongoing basis. Most believed that it was a function of supervision and management to monitor stress, but did not have specific strategies in mind for doing so. Some organisations acted against employee stress and burnout by evaluating reasons for burnout, having outside consultants, insisting that individuals took leave and being flexible with time. Most organisations tried to train their workers on how to deal with stress. Most organisations mentioned that sometimes their social workers were unable to meet service delivery demands due to stress.

5.2.11 Reputation

Respondents had varied opinions regarding social work's reputation in South Africa and on whether the reputation could impact on retention levels of social workers. One aspect mentioned was that it seemed that social work as a profession is not valued and respected to a great enough extent.

5.2.12 Job Satisfaction

Respondents believed that their social workers experienced job satisfaction although most organisations did not conduct climate scales (Moos, 1994) and were thus not informed on the nature of job satisfaction among their social workers. Achievement and acknowledgement were considered significant contributors to social worker satisfaction. Despite this, respondents believed that salaries were the most important factor in increasing job satisfaction.

5.2.13 Motivation

Most of the respondents believed that the social workers working for their organisations were motivated because they did not leave their organisations and worked particularly hard. Respondents felt that areas that led to lack of motivation were social workers having unrealistic time frames for work and overloaded workers having to carry others' workloads due to vacancies. Some mentioned that levels of motivation depended on the time of year and the work that a social worker was doing at the time. Some felt that organisational inability to pay higher salaries caused their social workers to feel de-motivated.

5.2.14 Remuneration

From the findings it can be seen that most respondents believed that entry level social workers should earn about R10 000. The lowest amount mentioned was R8500 and the highest was R12 000. Most respondents felt that their NGO's pay was competitive in comparison with other NGO's but all mentioned that they believed state social workers earned more than NGO social workers. Most felt this was unfair but felt that they were not able to raise sufficient donor funds to increase the salary amount of their social work staff. Benefits given varied between different NGO's and NGO's and the state. Most organisations offered their workers pension, maternity leave,

medical aid and UIF although the quantities varied. All offered maternity leave although most organisations indicated that it was unpaid leave. Most did not offer paid membership of the Professional Council for Social Work. None paid employees overtime instead paying time back with time. None of the organisations offered danger pay.

5.2.15 Rewards and performance appraisals

All organisations indicated that they assessed performance. Only some utilised structured performance appraisal systems however. All respondents believed that they were aware of which of their employees were performing at superior levels and which were not. Only some organisations paid performance bonuses and increased salary on merit. Most organisations did not have adequate systems in place to recognise superior performance. All respondents believed that they dealt with inefficient workers adequately. All had disciplinary procedures although most preferred to take a developmental route within these systems.

5.2.16 Staff Development

Organisations varied in their approaches to orientation of new social workers. A large majority felt that their social workers were overwhelmed when they first entered their positions. Career growth was dependant on the organisation as some seemed to offer more development than others. All organisations conducted on-the-job-training. Most organisations gave employees the freedom to make decisions and try new things as long as they did not cause harm to the organisation or its' client base.

5.2.17 Supervision

Organisations made use of various types of supervision. Most tried to supervise social workers once every two weeks. Most respondents commented that duration of supervision sessions largely depended on the social workers' level of experience. Because of distances, a number of staff were supervised telephonically and via e-mail. Most did not have set times or appointments for supervision. Organisations did not always differentiate between administrative, supportive, and educative supervision although most felt that all three were given an equal percentage of time. Some said adjustments were made according to the needs of the social worker or the strengths of

the specific supervisor involved. Most organisations tended to use one-on-one supervision with occasional group supervision. Findings indicated that other types of supervision were not used and that not all supervisors were trained to supervise.

5.2.18 Management

Most of the organisations seemed to have the necessary systems in place to ensure good communication and transparency. All organisations tried to eliminate unnecessary red tape and most strove not to be overly bureaucratic. Most believed that they could trust their workers and that their organisations had an atmosphere of trust and most believed that they did not have rigid and unnecessary work-place rules.

5.3 Recommendations

In view of the research findings and their contextualisation according to literature, the researcher has divided the recommendations into the following categories:

- Recommendations for government
- Recommendations for NGO's

The recommendations provided will be based on the suggestions of the interview respondents (See Chapter 4) as well as the researcher linked to strategies that have been utilised internationally as discussed in the Literature Review (Chapter 2).

5.3.1 Recommendations for NGO's

5.3.1.1 Social Work as a scarce skill

- As social work is a scarce skill in South Africa, non-governmental organisations need to find ways to retain their social workers.
- NGO's need to work towards having specific organisational policies on social worker retention. These can include making the above-mentioned strategies for retention a priority.

5.3.1.2 Cost of turnover

- Ways need to be found to reduce the costs and implications of turnover. Turnover needs to be seen as problematic due to the effect it has on NGO's, their staff and their client base. Organisations need to ensure that money is not wasted through turnover costs. Decreasing turnover will address this issue.

5.3.1.3 Reasons why social workers are leaving NGO's

- NGO's need to conduct confidential exit interviews to ascertain reasons why social workers resign.
- Organisation management should consider the reasons why social workers leave their organisations and specifically look at improving factors that are within their control.

5.3.1.4 Factors that are within the control of NGO management

- Fair pay and benefits are some of the most common reasons cited when looking at reasons why employees stay at organisations (Kaye et al, 1999). Organisations need to work even harder at finding effective fundraising strategies if finding finances to increase salaries is a problem. They should hire a fundraiser if necessary. There should be a minimum salary level for social workers in accordance with the fact that it is a profession. NGO's need to not only look at their salaries but at their benefits as well. They need to offer competitive benefits and try to balance them with state benefits. Fair pay and benefits are some of the reasons cited by Kaye et al (1999) when looking at common reasons why employees stay at organisations.
- Ways need to be found to accommodate younger social workers so that they show the commitment and endurance of their forebears. This is necessary as Freund (2005) explains that high levels of organizational commitment generally mean that a social worker's intentions to leave an organisation are lower and that they are prepared to invest more personal energy and resources into the organization, leading to more efficient and professional performance
- NGO's need to maximise on the aspects of social work that their social workers enjoy and try to ensure that they are given enough time to focus on

areas that give them job satisfaction. Workers need to be regularly assessed for levels of job satisfaction and motivation. Job satisfaction needs to be addressed at some of the organisations and more research needs to be done into factors that would make their workers more satisfied in their jobs. Part of this is conducting climate scales on a regular basis. The Work Environment Scale (Moos, 1994) is one such Scale that can be bought from a psychometrist.

- NGO's need to work to reduce the stressful aspects related to social work that are in their control. Ways need to be found to employ more community workers, auxiliary workers, interns, volunteers and student social workers, as these individuals can assist social workers with their work. Social workers also need to be trained on how to manage time and work with high case loads in an efficient and effective manner.
- NGO's need to make sure that their social workers feel as safe as possible in the work place. As seen by respondent comments, this might include aspects such as social workers having extra support when they are on home visits, having cell phones with airtime when not in the office and organisations having security officials on site. Where possible, organisations should offer their social workers job security. Social workers need to be educated in terms of legal liability in order to protect them from uncertainty and unnecessary fear which could lead them to be more likely to leave a social work position.
- Organisations need to establish the necessary resources for their workers and ensure these are available. Where social workers are expected to use their own cars they must be adequately reimbursed. Resources such as e-mail addresses can save time and money as opposed to faxing. Social workers should be able to type and use Microsoft word, excel, internet and e-mail. If they cannot, they should be trained in these. NGO's need to network with one another when physical resources are lacking in communities. This could include compiling a list of areas that affect service delivery and working to ensure that adequate resources are in place.
- Organisations need to assess their social workers for stress and burnout on a regular basis and provide regular training and support for their workers on these aspects. Where social workers are showing signs of stress and burnout organisations must take appropriate action that will be long lasting and not of

a temporary nature. It appeared that most organisations did not have comprehensive systems in place to prevent burnout within the management system and organisations should address this as authors such as Cherniss (1995) discuss the importance of support for managers.

- It is apparent that organisations should strive to motivate their social workers by considering factors other than money such as those discussed by Freund (2005) and Ahlrichs (2000).
- Given that South Africa's social workers are in low supply and high demand, organisations should constantly review their policies on reward. Those that do not have adequate performance appraisals need to realise how important these aspects are.
- Staff development is a major factor in retention (Kaye et al, 1999) and management needs to maximise on every opportunity to develop their staff. This will ultimately also benefit the organisation and the client system. Social workers need to be challenged to keep up with trends and new theory. Organisations need to see staff development as more than just sending their staff on training. Where there is training they need to look into their training policies and implement training structures for the staff that want extra training and need it.
- Smith (2005) shows that good supervision should ultimately decrease worker dissatisfaction that could lead to turnover. Given the fact that authors such as Smith (2005) and Westbrook et al (2006) show the direct links between supervision and retention of social workers, organisations should work to ensure their supervision is the best it can be. They need to ensure that there are solid structures in place for supervision. Social workers need to know when they are going to be supervised and have regular times and dates set up with their supervisors. NGO's can consider contracting external supervisors to fulfil a supportive function for their social workers as suggested by one respondent.
- Management of NGO's needs to work to maintain appropriate levels of transparency and limit bureaucracy. They should also give social workers enough freedom and responsibility to increase job satisfaction. As illustrated by Kaye et al (1999), when employees are trusted, most will be trustworthy and feel honoured and respected.

- Controls need to be more standardised where larger organisations have smaller branches that are self-governed. There should be more continuity in managerial practices such as fund raising and performance appraisals. Head offices need to ensure that they are not better managed and better resourced than local offices

5.3.2 Recommendations for government

5.3.2.1 Funding

- It is recommended that government work to help NGO's pay their social workers the same salaries and benefits as state social workers. They should also subsidize more posts and programmes where necessary. Naturally this includes monitoring and evaluation of NGO's. Government and NGO's should not feel that they are in competition as suggested by one research respondent.
- There need to be more opportunities for promotion. Promotions should not merely be due to age and experience but rather for work excellence. Promotion should not merely include movement into management. NGO's and government should investigate other forms of movement possible for social workers, considering subsidisation difficulties. Government should address subsidisation difficulties in this regard.

5.3.2.2 Partnerships

- Government and NGO's need to form a partnership for retention of social workers in order to avoid competition for scarce human resources. NGO's need to feel that this really is a partnership and that the state is not merely trying to control them. This feeling of 'control' was seen as problematic by several respondents.

5.3.3 Reputation of social work

- All role players in the social work profession need to begin aggressively marketing social work's role in society and what social workers are capable of. Where social workers are conducting services that are not of a professional nature it can have a negative impact on the reputation of social work as a

profession, which may decrease social workers job satisfaction. Perhaps it is time for organisations to work towards providing more excellent services and to really see social work as the ‘profession’ that it is.

5.3.3.4 Theory and information-sharing:

- Both government and non-governmental organisations need to be aware of management theories surrounding retention. Information needs to be shared more readily between all in order to better serve the client system as a whole.

5.4 Suggestions for further research

The researcher feels that further research in the following areas would be helpful for the social work profession: 1. Research looking at the perceptions of social workers with regard to turnover and retention, 2. research looking at recruitment of social workers and the marketing of social work as a profession and 3. research looking at client perceptions of social worker turnover.

5.5 Concluding Comments

This chapter has provided a brief outline of the main conclusions of this research and listed some of the researcher’s recommendations. It is evident that this research has highlighted some important aspects with regard to social worker retention and it is hoped that various role players will take note of the recommendations and implement them where possible.

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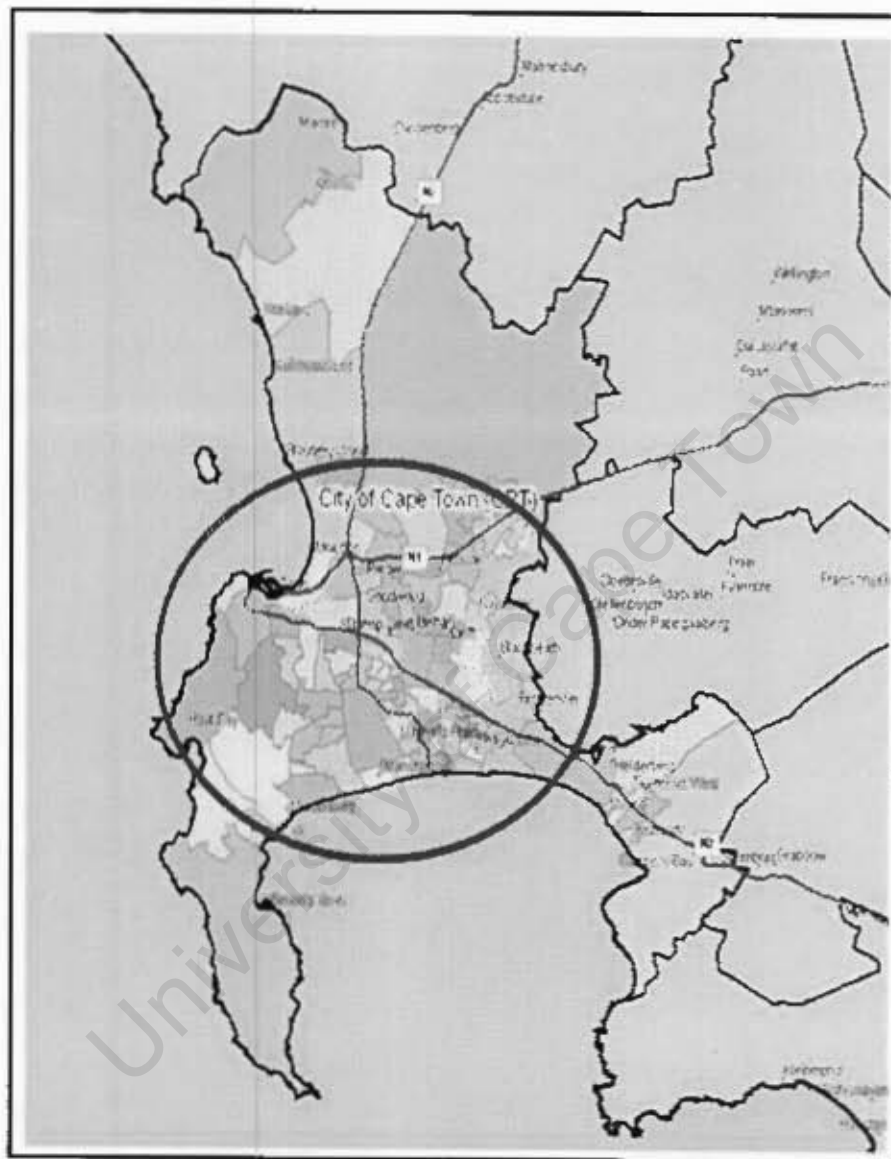
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APPENDICES

University of Cape Town

Appendix A: Map of area



Appendix B: Letter of permission

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



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16 October 2007

To whom it concerns

Dear Sir/Madam

BY HAND

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH: MS K NAUDE

This certifies that Ms Kirsten Naude is registered with this Department for a Master's Degree in Social Policy and Management. She is required to conduct research as a partial fulfilment of the degree requirements. She will be examining the strategies used by NGO management to retain social workers and as such intends interviewing the directors of all NGO's in the Cape Town metropole area employing five or more social workers.

While adding to knowledge in the field, it is hoped that this research will also show organizational management and policy makers aspects of retention that have been neglected. If findings are accessed and used by NGO's, a larger consequence of this study should be improved socialwork service delivery in South Africa.

It will be sincerely appreciated if your organization will agree to partake in this research. Each organization and participant in the study will be assured of anonymity. The importance of this research cannot be overestimated. The results will be used to inform organizational policy and ultimately serve to assist social workers and NGO's with the problem of high social worker turnover. As such, your contribution to knowledge generation will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Signature removed

Andre de V Smit
Associate Professor
Head of Department

Appendix C: Introduction to interview

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study on the retention of social workers in South Africa.

Before we begin our interview please note the following:

1. This study aims to fulfil part of the requirements for the Masters program for Social Policy and Management at the University of Cape Town. The intention is to examine strategies used by organisations, in the non governmental sector of Cape Town, to retain social workers.
2. Due to the scope of this research, it will merely be a preliminary study focusing on the area encompassed by the Cape Town Metropole. The sample will comprise of all the organisations in this area employing more than five social workers. This totals to 15 organisations.
3. This study will make use of qualitative research. This type of research depends on the honesty of participants as they can influence the reliability of findings.
4. Each respondent is guaranteed privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality. The researcher will ensure that answers cannot be traced back to individual respondents or organisations. Please let this knowledge put you at ease as it will obviously improve the quality of the research if the respondents feel comfortable to express their true feelings.
5. This research will be published and all participants will have access to the findings of the study. It is hoped that these findings will be useful in informing government, NGO's and policy makers on the issue of social worker retention.

The goals of this research are:

1. To establish how many social workers have left each NGO in the past 2 years
2. To determine whether or not each NGO has a specific policy in place regarding retention of social work staff
3. To look at the strategies NGO's employ in order to retain their social work staff
4. To explore the perceptions of NGO management toward social worker retention
5. To examine the strategies that NGO's use to retain their social workers and to determine the effectiveness of these strategies

This research comes in the wake of social work being declared a scarce skill in South Africa. The topic of social worker retention has been given a fair amount of attention of late and this has been largely pre-empted by the Draft Recruitment and Retention Strategy for Social Workers released by the South African government on 31 March 2006. Other than this, there is little light shed on this issue in South African literature and the purpose of this research is therefore to provide much-needed information on this topic.

Kirsten Naude

Appendix D: Interview schedule

Interview schedule: Please answer the following questions briefly and concisely

SECTION 1: (SEE TABLE ON LAST PAGE)

1.1 Background information on specific organisation

1.2 Information for secondary data analysis: Information regarding social workers who have left

SECTION 2: PERCEPTIONS ON THE NEED FOR RETENTION STRATEGIES

2.1 Social work as a scarce skill

Prompts

- Do you believe that there are sufficient numbers of practising social workers in South Africa to address its needs?
- Are you aware that Social work has been declared a scarce skill in our country? Is this a good thing or a bad thing?
- Do you think that significant numbers of social workers are leaving the country? If so why?
- Do you believe that significant numbers of social workers are leaving the profession? If so why?

2.2 Policies on social worker retention

Prompts

- Do you believe that ways need to be found to retain social workers in South Africa?
- Do you believe that government and NGO's should have specific policies on social worker retention in South Africa
- Are you familiar with the draft recruitment and retention strategy outlined by government?
- Do you think that it affects NGO's and your NGO in particular? If so, how?
- Does your organisation have a specific policy regarding Social worker retention? If so, what is it? If not, does it see the need to have one and are there plans to introduce one in the future.

SECTION 3: STRATEGIES THAT CAN BE USED TO RETAIN SOCIAL WORKERS

1. Adaptation of Work content and work load

Prompts

- Do your social workers enjoy the work that they do?
- Are there any aspects of the work that they do that they don't enjoy? If so, what are these?

- How do you establish the case load and work load of your social workers?
- Do you think that the social workers at your organisation have more work than they are able to do comfortably? Do they complain about it?
- How do you think you can reduce the case load and work load of your social workers?
- Is there any form of specialisation at your organisation?
- Do you have social auxiliary workers and interns to assist the social workers? If so, how do they assist?
- Do you think you have enough social workers to work in the geographical areas encompassed by and address the core business of your organisation?
- Should government sponsor more posts to enable your organisation to hire more social workers?

2. Adaptation of working conditions and resources

Prompts

- What would you view as inadequate working conditions for your workers?
- Are any of these a reality?
- What resources do you consider mandatory for your social workers to work effectively? (Physical and in the community?)
- Do your social workers all have their own offices?
- Please indicate if your social workers have their own or access to the following: PC's, telephones, printers, fax machines, internet, e-mail addresses, photocopy machines, cars. Please specify their access for each
- Does your organisation have a website? If so, how regularly is it updated
- Does your organisation make use of electronic data bases? If so, is the content up to date and is the system modern and effective

3. Increasing levels of Security

Prompts

- Do you believe that your social workers feel secure in terms of
 - personal safety
 - job security
 - legal liability

Please explain your answer for each

- If your social workers are in work-related trouble with the law how do you support them (e.g. would your organisation pay for lawyers?)
- When looking at the different fields of social work encompassed by this study (see list), rate them in order of most to least safe.
- What policies has your organisation got in place to do with occupational health and safety?
- What is your organisations policy on contract workers?
- Do you believe those contract workers would rather be in permanent positions? Percentage?

4. Decreasing stress and burnout issues

Prompts

- Are your social workers ever assessed for burnout? If so, how frequently?
- Does your organisation do anything to compensate for the pressure and stress that your social workers deal with on a daily basis? (E.g. debriefing/ time off)
- Are your social workers trained to deal with their own stress?
- Is your organisation linked to an Employee Assistance Programme?
- Do your social workers ever face an inability to meet service delivery demands due to stress and if this is the case, what is done to assist them?
- What coping mechanisms do your social workers seem to adopt most often in relation to stressful situations?
- When looking at the different fields of social work encompassed by this study (see list), rate them in order of most stressful to least stressful
- What systems are in place for burnout within management?
- Have you ever been/ are you burnt out yourself?
- How do you manage your stress?

5. Fair remuneration

Prompts

- What do you think that social workers should earn on an entry level?
- What salary scale are your social workers on? Do you think they receive a competitive remuneration package in comparison with other NGO's
- What prevents you from paying them more than you currently do?
- Is government subsidising enough of the salary percentage?
- How do you raise the rest of the money for salaries?
- Do you think that the entry level salary for government social workers is different to that of NGO's? If so, how do you feel about this?
- Do you think that social worker remuneration in South Africa is generally fair in comparison with other professions?

6. Fair employee benefits

Prompts

- Which of the following benefits does your organisation offer its social workers: Maternity leave, pension, medical aid, tuition reimbursement, paid membership of professional councils, overtime/flexitime UIF, danger pay)
- Do you pay all or a portion of costs? Please elaborate and give a percentage for each.
- Does your organisation do anything unexpected for the social workers as a special treat (E.g. meals at the office, personal internet access in free time, special deals at day spa's)

7. Offering rewards

Prompts

- Does your organisation offer performance related rewards to its social workers?
- Do your staff ever receive team rewards? (E.g. a holiday overseas)

- Do your staff receive individual rewards? If so, please elaborate
- Are you aware of which of your employees perform at superior levels? How?
- How do you acknowledge those employees who work particularly hard?

8. Ensuring staff development and training

Prompts

- When social workers begin working for your organisation do they go through an orientation period? If so, how long is it and what does it entail?
- Are your social workers provided with a job description when they first begin working for your organisation?
- Are your social workers eased into their jobs or do you think they feel completely overwhelmed when they first start?
- Is there on the job training. If so, who conducts it?
- Do you believe that your organisation gives room for the development and career growth of its social workers? Please elaborate
- Are there opportunities for promotions?
- Are there career possibilities in terms of horizontal movement?
- What opportunities are there for movement in terms of realignment, exploration and relocation?
- What opportunities are there for further and continuous learning?
- On average how often do your social workers go on training?

9. Performance reviews that develop the individual

Prompts

- Does your organisation make use of a performance review system?
- How do you assess performance? (E.g. a five point scale)
- Do you think that your supervisors write candid performance reviews? What measures are in place to ensure that they do so?
- When do you raise salaries? Are they performance based or according to tenure?
- Are you aware of the employees in your organisation who do not perform adequately? How are you aware of them?
- How does discipline work in your organisation?
- If you had low performers would anything done about them to rectify the situation?
- Do you have an organisation-specific code of conduct?

10. A lesser degree of formalisation

Prompts

- How does your organisation ensure that is transparent to its employees and stakeholders? Please elaborate
- What information would you choose not to share with your employees?
- How does management communicate with employees
- Does your organisation strive to cut down on unnecessary red tape? How?
- Do your social workers have to clock in?
- Are they able to work flexible hours and manage their own time? How does this work? (e.g. if they want to write reports at home)

- Is there a culture of trust of your social workers or would they misuse freedom if they were given too much of it?
- Are there any rigid and unnecessary work place rules at your organisation?
- Do your social workers have the freedom to make decisions on their own and try new things? If so, within what boundaries and how do you determine these boundaries?

11. Supervision

Prompts

- Do your employees have set supervision times
- If so, how often are they supervised and for how long? Is this amount a requirement?
- Please allocate a percentage of time given towards each type of supervision your social workers receive: Administrative, supportive, and educative
- What is the nature of this supervision (E.g. a one-to-one relationship, case consultation, group, coaching, feedback pupil-teacher learning situation, peer group discussion?)
- Are your supervisors trained to supervise?
- What is the supervisor's role in the social workers personal career development?
- Do the social workers ever come into contact with anyone more senior than their direct supervisor for supervision?

12. Good external relationships

Prompts

- Does your organisation have the cooperation of law enforcement/ SAPS?
- What is your working relationship with them like?
- What is your organisations relationship with the Department of Social Development like?
- What is your organisations relationship with the Education department like?
- Does your organisation readily network with other NGO's. If so, in what capacity?

13. Increasing job satisfaction

Prompts

- Do you believe that your social workers are satisfied in their jobs on the whole? Please give a percentage and explain why you answered in this way
- Have you ever conducted a climate scale? If so, when was this done?
- What do you think makes your social workers satisfied/ unsatisfied with their jobs?
- If you look at the social workers who have been with your organization the longest, what do you think differentiates them from those who don't stay?

14. Increasing motivation

Prompts

- Do you believe that your social workers are motivated or de-motivated in their jobs on the whole? (e.g. do they have a high morale)
- Do you use any of the following incentives: Job rotation, additional leave, sabbaticals
- What is your philosophy about fun at work?
- What percentage of social workers enjoy working for your organisation?
- Which of the following intrinsic motivators do your social workers experience: achievement, recognition, power, affiliation, equity, advancement, responsibility
- Does management work to remind its employees of how important they are to the organisation? If so, how
- Does your organisation display care and concern to its employees (E.g. birthday/ sympathy cards)
- Does South Africa's Employment Equity plan affect your organisation? If so, explain how.
- Does this affect staff motivation?
- How do you handle staff grievances?
- How do you handle public complaints?
- Are your social workers linked to trade unions? If not are they allowed to be linked to them?

SECTION 4: PERCEPTIONS OF MANAGEMENT RELATED TO SOCIAL WORK RETENTION

1. Social works reputation/professionalism questioned

Prompts

- What do you think is the reputation social work has in South Africa? Is it good or bad?
- How could the reputation of social work influence levels of retention?

2. Turnover

Prompts

- On average how long do social workers work for your organisation?
- What are your views on high levels of unplanned turnover?
- What do you think are the costs and implications of turnover (e.g. finding new social workers and having vacancies)?
- When your organisation has vacancies, what happens to the work load?
- Does your organisation conduct exit interviews? If so, what are the three main reasons social workers give for leaving?
- Do you believe that your social workers are honest in the reasons they give for leaving?
- Do you think they would be a good promoter and advertisement for your organisation once they have left?
- Have you ever reacted with dismay when you heard an employee was leaving? If so, did you do anything to try convincing them to change their mind and did it work? If so, give an example

- When your social workers leave how quickly and easily are they replaced?
- Do you advertise vacant posts immediately
- When you advertise a post how many people respond? What percentage of them are good candidates?
- Have you ever found yourself hiring a person who was not the best person for the job because there was no one else?
- How do you work to match people to specific jobs or is this considered a luxury?
- Do you ever ask your employees what it would take for them to be lured away by another organisation and what it would take to make them stay? If so, what are their answers?

3. Finally

Do you have anything more to add on the topic of social worker retention?

*Note Please complete the following form and fax it back to the interviewer

Please can you or a representative furnish me with the following information?

1. Current number of permanent social workers at your organisation: _____
2. Current number of social workers on contract at your organisation: _____
3. Current number of social work vacancies: _____
4. Number of social workers who have left/ are leaving in the period 01-01-06 to 30-11-07 _____
5. The reason/s they gave for leaving: _____

6. Average statutory case load for your social workers: _____
7. Do you have a specific retention policy (Y/N) _____

Looking at the social workers who have left your organisation please fill in the following table

Social worker number	Sex F/M	Age	Years serving as a social worker	Time served at organisation (give dates)	Contract or permanent worker C/P

Appendix E: Extra Organisational information on turnover

Organisation.	Current number of permanent social workers	Current number of contract social workers	Current number of vacancies	No. of social workers who have left/ are leaving in the period 01-01-06 to 30-11-07	% Turn Over	Average statutory case load	Do you have a retention policy? (Y/N)
A	25	1	4	21	80	-	No
B							
C	22	-	2	9	40	150	No
D							
E	10	1	-	4	36	-	No
F	119	3	4	45	37	140	No
G		25	1	15	60	-	Yes
H							
I	3	2	-	2	40	-	No
J0							
K1	10	0	1	7	63	80	No
L2	6	0	0	2	33	-	No